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The Matrimonial Bureau

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Page 137

"I'M NOT A SPOILED CHILD"

The Matrimonial Bureau

by

Carolyn Wells

and

Harry Persons Taber

BOSTON·AND·NEW·YORK

Houghton Mifflin & Company

THE·RIVERSIDE·PRESS·CAMBRIDGE

1905

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TO NANCY

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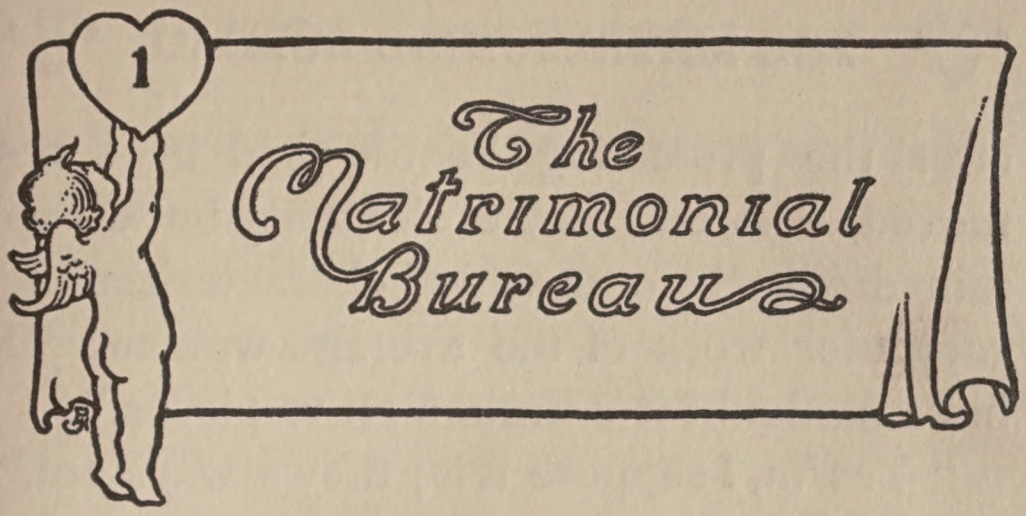

Think you there was, or might be such a man as this I dreamed of?—*Antony and Cleopatra.*

It all happened in the most curious fashion to begin with. If Lieutenant Adams had not sent to Miss Esther the particularly heavy box which contained some sort of a plaster cast which he had picked up somewhere, and which necessitated a great deal of packing-stuff to keep it from breaking, Tekla never would have found the paper. Then, too, she never would have found the paper if Michael had been about the place on the afternoon the box came. But he was n't, and Miss Esther was impatient. The box had to be unpacked, so she and Tekla, armed with a hatchet, a screw-driver, and a monkey-wrench, went at it.

"I expect it 's broken," said Miss Esther,

after the protecting boards had been removed, with that lack of dexterity but determined effectiveness which characterizes the carpenter work of the average woman; "I have no doubt it's broken all to pieces."

"Yes 'm, I suppose it is; they always are," said Tekla, cheerfully, as she pulled out the bunches of paper which were stuffed about the cast.

"It was packed carefully enough," said Miss Esther.

"Yes, indeed, ma'am. They must have used all the papers they had saved up for housecleaning time. I don't know what they'll have left to put on their pantry shelves."

"I 'm glad they did; this is a specially fine cast, and I do hope it is n't broken. It looks as if it were, though."

Miss Esther took hold of the end of the cast and tried to lift it out. She succeeded in extricating it from the mass of papers and carried it off in triumph.

Tekla brought a basket and began picking up the crumpled papers from the kitchen

floor. Some large figures on one bit caught her eye.

"'Circulation yesterday, 840,327,'" she read; "must have used 'em all."

She went on picking up the papers, carefully smoothing out those pieces which she believed might be of use for such purposes as suggest themselves to the careful housewife. "I wish," she thought, "that they hadn't crumpled these things up so much. They might just as well have left them flat. We could have used them then."

At the very bottom of the box she found several voluminous Sunday newspapers that apparently had never been opened. "At least here's a few smooth ones," she continued with a satisfied air.

As she laid them aside, a conspicuous picture attracted her attention. "That," said Tekla, after a long, steady stare at it, "is the kind of place I'm going to live in. There should be cows — yes — like those," and she held the picture at arm's length. "Chickens — yes — and dogs. Some calves, maybe, and pigeons and pigs, the same like those! Ah!"

Again she held the picture out before her and gazed at it. "It is all there, all — but the man — not!"

Taking down the big shears from their nail, Tekla cut out the picture and pinned it up above the kitchen table. "But I will have the cow-sheds nearer the house," she said as she turned away. "They are not handy, so."

In the household of Miss Esther Adams, a Sunday newspaper was almost an unknown quantity. To Tekla the discovery of three or four complete sheets, with all the various "sections" carefully put together, was an event of thrilling importance. She hurried through her work, and sat down that evening to enjoy without interruption the unexpected windfall.

By a slow and laborious process of elimination she laid aside the primarily colored pages, the reproduced photographs, the editorial sections, and other interesting but unbelievable stories, and reserved only the advertisements.

These she read eagerly, marking with her pencil such pictured glories of feminine apparel as appealed to her somewhat barbaric taste.

Idly scanning one of the more uninteresting looking pages, she chanced upon a sort of advertisement which seemed to her to be wholly new. Nothing like it had ever fallen under her observation.

SPINSTERS ATTENTION!

Why remain unappropriated blessings? Why waste your sweetness on the desert air? Somewhere there is a heart that beats for you alone. He may be on our list. We have bankers, brokers, clergymen, lawyers, merchants, farmers, —

"Farmers!" said Tekla, thoughtfully.

— machinists, carpenters, masons, and others. Every one of our clients is a worthy, honorable gentleman who wants a wife. If you will send $1 and your photograph, we will enter your name upon our records.

Tekla read and re-read this advertisement. "Only a dollar, — that is not so much. And they said farmers."

She raised her eyes to the picture she had pinned up on the wall.

"A farm — and a farmer, and some cows yet, and chickens. A house like that, and two pigs and two horses and a kitchen all over white paint — with a yellow floor — "

She hesitated, looked at the picture again doubtfully, and continued. "It stands in the advertisement that there should be a farmer. I will do it! I will send yet one dollar."

Tekla had lived under the influence of Miss Esther so long that whatever she did was more or less tinged with the old-fashioned fineness which characterized her large-hearted, gentle-minded mistress. Therefore, after a considerable amount of earnest effort, she produced this letter:

WHITFIELD, June 8th.

DEAR SIR, — I have read your advertisement and would say that I inclose herewith one dollar. Please enter my name on your records, and I would like a farmer.

The farm must contain many acres, also many cows, pigs, sheep, and a donkey. But

there must be no bees, as I do not enjoy stinging.

I have never lived on a farm, but I have a picture of one, and I am sure it will be good. I have lived with Miss Esther for seven years and she has trusted me with the care of her large house, and she says I am too good for James, who drives for the Doctor.

So please, Dear Sir, if among your worthy and honorable gentlemen there is a farmer with a farm which I have described, I should be glad to hear from you by return of post.

Yours to Command,

TEKLA KLEIN.

P. S. — My Mother is dead.

Tekla carefully copied the address given in the advertisement, folded her letter, and inclosed it in the envelope. Then she took from the top drawer of the old dresser, which stood in the kitchen closet, a new dollar bill, which Major Bradford had given her on his last visit. That was the day, Tekla remem-

bered, when she had taken particular pains with the brushing of his uniform — it was the day of the dedication of the soldiers' monument. She regarded the new bill with real affection. She had had it more than a year. For a moment she hesitated. What if the farmer were not forthcoming in response to her request? But before her hung the picture of the farmhouse, the horses, cows, chickens — not one single bee was visible.

Tekla's sense of justice was such that she felt a certain responsibility to Miss Esther for the spending of her wages, but surely, she thought, with this particular dollar she had every right to do as she chose.

Therefore, trusting that the end would justify the means, she neatly folded the bill and placed it carefully with the letter in the already stamped and addressed envelope, and sealed it.

And so, as we said at first, if Lieutenant Adams had not sent the cast to his cousin, and if Michael had not been absent the day it came, and if Miss Esther had not in her impatience insisted upon Tekla's opening the

box, the little German girl would not have seen the picture of her farm, the letter would not have been written, Adolf Hecksher would never have come to Whitfield, this story would never have been written — and what would you have done then?

II

This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tyring-house; and we will do it in action. — *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

How the town came to be named Whitfield nobody who was fortunate enough to live there could remember, even if ever there had been any accurate information on the subject. The town was as old as those others in central and southern New York which are still worrying along under the burden of names bestowed upon them by that band of surveyors who, fresh from the schools where they had learned much of the history of ancient cities, had christened the still unpopulated quarter sections with the names of classic heroes, states, and battles. Utica, Syracuse, Troy, Palmyra, Cicero, Manlius, Sparta, Homer, Ovid, Ithaca, — these towns, it had been hoped by their sponsors in baptism, might grow up to be a credit to their distinguished namesakes. Whitfield may have been named for an

eminent Methodist clergyman. Or possibly not. And it did n't matter anyway.

Whitfield was like a hundred other towns of its sort. One may find the sort in almost any state except perhaps Arizona. It had an escape about three miles wide from being on the railroad, and in consequence there was little manufacturing. There was a long street which ran out at both ends of the town and got lost somewhere in the country. This street was cut at right angles by another of less pretension. Both streets were bordered by great old trees, maples and elms and an occasional hickory, which had been left from the days when there had been a forest thereabouts. Looking at the town from the surrounding hillsides, these trees shut out all view of the houses, but when the casual visitor arrived in the village he found that they merely shaded them, and they were grateful. There were other streets in the village, and according to the census reports Whitfield had a population of 896, but that was before the Henderson twins were born, and before the Richardsons —

eight of them — had moved into the Bradley house. Of course, this increase had been offset somewhat by the death of Kirk Buckley, who in a moment of temporary inebriety had walked one dark night into Deacon Wilson's stone quarry, with a fatal result.

So Whitfield had remained for some years practically stationary as to population. It was a quiet, orderly, rather dignified town. Its officials took it seriously. Casual visitors, who were entirely unsympathetic because they had been born in cities, were apt to smile a little at its peculiarities, which were not peculiarities, but only the natural outpourings of a heart interested in the doings of whosoever came within the line of vision. That was, and is to this day, the Whitfield of this story.

At one corner of the long street and the shorter one which intersected it stood the Adams house. When it had been built, a century before, the Putnam Adams who built it had called the place Elmwood, but the name had been forgotten. The house itself showed that essential severity which

characterized the Adamses, and was the pride of all Whitfield. It reproduced, as well as wood and white paint could do so, the development of the classic impulse which had its beginnings in eastern New York at the time when Sir William Johnson was made colonel of the Six Nations.

The broad, low pediment set squarely upon four Ionic columns, the wide stone veranda and massive stone steps were as much a part of the landscape as the historic Whitfield elms. The interior of the house reflected the Adams attitude of mind and action. There were few curves in the decorations. The white-painted panels were uncompromisingly square. The mahogany balustrade ran straight up from the broad hall, and the stairs opened frankly at the top into the wide corridor which cut the upper floor into two halves, — five rooms on one side, five on the other, all precisely similar in size and shape. Every line which, architecturally, had to do with the making of the house, was straight up and down or straight across. There were no angles but

right ones. There were no curves except those of the Ionic columns, and Colonel Adams had said after the house was built that he even wished he had made these square. But it was too late, and to-day in Whitfield these same columns stand, a lasting monument to the one weakness of decision in the character of Colonel Putnam Adams, of His Majesty's forces in the Colonies.

But there was one other monument — the library.

While the library as it exists now could not, in the very nature of things, have been built entire by the first Putnam Adams, yet he laid the foundation for it; and when he was sent to America by the king, and found a place where he was to build his home, he fetched with him from England the library which he had collected in France and Italy and Germany. Begun with little thought as to its ultimate fate, this collection of books had grown with the changing tastes of the young soldier. There were the classics in original and translation; much Greek

poetry, a wonderful edition of Horace, picked up in Rome, and bound in leather and gold, which bore the magic signature, deeply wrought, of Leonardo da Vinci. Then there was a Machiavelli and the stories of his wars and his methods of statesmanship; there was the story of the Life, which Benvenuto Cellini himself had written, and this book the Colonel had caused to be inclosed in a case of silver which bore upon its cover the arms of the House of the Cenci. This book he worshiped with a worship which was little short of idolatry. In the long evenings, when the Indians were at rest and the messages from Sir William were such as to allow him some freedom, he would shut himself in his rooms — wherever he might be — and sit the whole night through, living again with the Benvenuto those fearsome hours when he fought his way through the streets of Florence, leaving in his wake a line of fourteen dead men's bodies — but rushing on to his Art and his Love.

Perhaps, after all, that was why Colonel

Putnam Adams decided on the curves for the capitals of the columns which guarded the entrance to the home which he had built for Margery, the daughter of the governor of Plymouth Colony.

The second Putnam Adams inherited his father's tastes and spent much of his time among the books, eagerly adding to the shelves such volumes as his somewhat limited opportunities made possible.

Miss Esther's father, the third Putnam Adams, enlarged the collection still further, for in his time the flood of literature which marked the Victorian era had already begun. He acquired not only valuable classics, as had his ancestors, but also contemporary fiction, essays, and poetry.

The wife of the third Putnam Adams died when Esther was a baby, and the child grew up in the great house with only her father for guide, counselor, and friend. He was a silent man,—not stern with his little daughter, but maintaining the uncompromising dignity of the Adams family. He spent his days in the library, and Esther was

allowed to stay there only on condition that she should not speak to him when he was reading. Often the child would stand wistfully waiting until he should lay down his book. But often he would do so only to take up another, and Esther would turn hopelessly away to amuse herself. Her amusements were peculiarly her own, and were not those which would have been considered entertaining by most children. She invented her own games. For the lonely child there was a certain fascination about a crowd of people, and her games always included certain strange individuals, who, though invisible to others, were very real to her. She peopled the stairs with vast armies marching valiantly up the hill and down again; she crowded the parlors with squires and dames of high degree, who danced minuets of great intricacy, bowing gallantly and languidly waving feathered fans.

The old Adams stables she filled with palfreys and milk-white steeds, and the barnyard with peacocks and falcons. In the grass plot in front of the house Esther could see

a sun-dial where she fully expected in some year to come to hold tryst with a lover who should wear a velvet cloak and a curling feather, and who would say "Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I could say good-night till it be morrow," and then would kiss her hand — just as Romeo did in the wonderful old engraving in the Gilbert Shakespeare.

Thus Esther Adams grew up. She went through the Whitfield school as a matter of course, but her tasks were easily learned and her school life was casual and perfunctory and quite outside the sentient part of her being. She lived in "that land where Rosalind and Imogen are — a Paradise apart." The woodland about the old place was the Forest of Arden. The bank of the brook formed the shores of Illyria where the musicians played before the duke, and where Esther played the part — yes, lived the part — of Viola, and told to the wondering birds how she was letting concealment feed on her damask cheek.

Instead of these fancies passing away, later

years brought to Esther Adams a stronger sense of reality in her dreams, and she but the more thoroughly identified herself with the creatures which her imagination had appropriated. Through girlhood to womanhood she lived Romance, sometimes as Rosalind, sometimes as Iseult, and sometimes, when in desperate mood, as Catherine of Medici.

But though the grass plot and the stairs had certain advantages of stage-setting, yet it was in the library that Esther gave her fancy fullest rein. The reason for this was too subtle to be understood by the child; but she had an inexplicable, intangible sense of the atmosphere of the books. As she grew older, this became clear to her, and she enjoyed her library with the definite knowledge of the satisfaction to be derived from the actual physical presence of books.

For forty-five years she had enjoyed this library, as she believed, as much as was possible for her, without quite realizing that there was a sense of restraint in the presence

of her father. Though she adored the silent man and gladly submitted to his mandates, the restrictions placed upon her as a child were never removed until the day of her father's death, and it was not until after that event that she came to know what freedom from even unconsciously obeyed authority meant. And in the ten years since she had invested the room with more of her own personality, and instead of being as it had been before, merely a library, it was now her home.

Although always surrounded by her unreal associates, for the last seven years Miss Esther's only human companion had been Tekla, the maid, and Tekla was very human. When she came to live at the Adams house, Miss Esther was shocked at her deplorable ignorance, and immediately began to teach her at least the rudiments of an education. The good lady consciously and laboriously taught her charge reading and writing, but far more easily yet, she unwittingly instilled in Tekla's mind a romantic sort of fancy not unlike her own. And that 's how it happened

that Tekla's stolidly practical German adaptation of Miss Esther's ideas clothed the problematical farmer with a reality only second to Miss Esther's Romeos.

III

But where is Kate? where is my lovely bride?
— *Taming of the Shrew.*

Not that Miss Esther had preferred imaginary Romeos. Imagination was all very well in its place, but she would have gladly welcomed a hero who could have spoken his own lines. Although she had never consciously or definitely wished for a husband, yet she had often felt the lack of that companionship which she knew could only be afforded by association with one whose mentality was equal to her own, whose tastes were congenial, and whose temperament was similar.

Without reflection upon her own sex, but with total indifference to the lack of feminine comradeship, Miss Esther preferred masculine society. During their long and somewhat lonely life together, her association with her father had been a real friendship; and though not a whit mannish, indeed

being herself the essence of femininity, men's traits and characteristics appealed strongly to Esther Adams.

More than this, she had, and knew she had, the capability to be a great deal to some one man. Responsive, tactful, loyal, and possessed of an instant perception, she demanded these qualities in the man she could love.

No one in Whitfield had ever qualified.

The young men who had entered into Miss Esther's girlhood life were not of inferior mental calibre, in the opinion of the best Whitfield society, but owing to Esther's possibly unfortunate fastidiousness, they did not come up to her standards. Her mentally intimate association with Galahad, Romeo, and The Admirable Crichton had made her exacting. It is not that she was unreasonable, nor did she complain; her demeanor toward the young men of Whitfield was marked by a gentle courtesy and frank good comradeship. Whitfield society did not understand her attitude, and could not have done so had she explained it to them — which she did not. Indeed, so misleading was her apparent

acceptance of their attentions, that more than one young man had put himself in a position to receive her gracious but decided refusal.

Through her girlhood years Miss Esther had thought it not impossible that she might yet meet a man who would be the realization of her ideals. But no strangers ever came to Whitfield, and her filial sense of duty would not allow her to leave her father alone, so she could not accept invitations to visit elsewhere, which would otherwise have given her great pleasure. Major Adams was so deeply occupied with his books that it never occurred to him that his daughter needed a change, or recreation of any sort other than that which was offered at home, although had she asked to go he would have gladly given consent. It had never occurred to him, either, but that she would sometime make a choice among the men of Whitfield, for he knew nothing of his daughter's ideals and was himself amply content with the society of his native town.

Once, when Whistler was shooting at a Scotch country place, he deliberately shot

a dog which was standing near by. Because, as he afterward explained, the dog was out of drawing. He should have been twenty feet further to the left, if in the landscape at all. And so it seemed to Miss Esther that the men who had come into her life had been "out of drawing." She did not shoot them, but she put them out of her life as completely as if they had been shot.

This state of things, however, did not leave Miss Esther's life as empty as might have been expected. The very qualities which induced this lack brought with them their own means of fulfilling it. Although without any definite acceptance of these facts, Miss Esther went on from day to day, living in the way which seemed to her to offer the best possible selection from all that life had to offer. The Romeos and Galahads of her happy fancies came nearer the perfection of her standards than did the men of Whitfield, and her dream-life with them was happier in its ideality than any real life she had seen. This play-life was begun by Esther Adams, sitting in prim frocks,

silent, her foot tucked comfortably under her on the straight-backed sofa of her father's library. It continued through the girlhood days when she was still known as Esther Adams ; and now, after many years, when, a woman of fifty, she was called Miss Esther by everybody in Whitfield, the gentle, gray-haired lady still found in the atmosphere of her wonderful old books the realization of the ideals which had been denied her elsewhere.

And so this is the explanation of why Miss Esther Adams never married.

One morning Miss Esther sat in her broad-armed veranda chair with her hands idly folded in her lap. She rocked slowly as she gazed across the lawn at the riotous rose-garden.

"Ay, 't is as thou sayest, Rosalind ; the blossoms be o'er-blown. They ought to have been cut earlier. They are really of no use now except to make potpourri. Heigh-ho, Rosalind, I wonder if your roses in the Forest of Arden ever bothered you as much as mine do me."

Miss Esther's attention was attracted from the roses by a stranger within her gates. This was an unusual occurrence ; even more so in that this stranger was a man. And he was big and broad and black-bearded, and distinctly of Teutonic origin. His air was assured, yet deferential, and he approached the house with the look of one who was certain of a waiting welcome.

"He looks like Thor," said Miss Esther, critically, "but I never saw a brunette Thor before."

With the pleasant manner of childlike confidence characteristic of the people of his country, he said :

"Is this Tekla Klein's house?"

"No, — not exactly —"

"That is too bad. I wished to marry her."

"Is that so?" said Miss Esther, with interest. "In that case perhaps I had better call her."

"If you will be so kind."

The big man seated himself on the lowest of the stone steps, removed his wide-brimmed

hat, and calmly wiped his forehead with a huge handkerchief.

Miss Esther looked at her brunette Thor steadily, with a dawning appreciation that here at last she was confronted by a dramatic situation quite to her taste. She went into the house and into the library. She rang the bell and in a moment Tekla appeared.

"There is a person inquiring for you at the front door," said Miss Esther.

"Yes, ma'am," said Tekla.

The stranger had not moved since Miss Esther went into the house, but at the sound of a footstep behind him he rose and went up the steps to where Tekla Klein stood by one of Putnam Adams's fluted pillars.

He took a letter from his pocket, and she saw that it was the one which she had written in answer to the advertisement.

"I have come," he said, simply.

Tekla looked at him critically, and then with an air of satisfaction she said, "It is good. And you have the farm?"

"Yes, a half-section, many — three hundred and twenty acres — one hundred

wheat, one hundred corn, one hundred and twenty in pasture."

"Is it in America?" asked Tekla.

"It is in Nebraska," he replied.

"Oh! I would rather it had been in America. But it does not matter. I will go."

Again the pleased smile broke over the big, good-natured face.

"I was born near Breslau. I am a German. I have lived in America fifteen years — ten years in Nebraska. I own my farm there, and my cattle. I am thirty-five years old. My name is Adolf Hecksher."

"Adolf is a nice name," said Tekla.

"Yes, it is a good name. It was my father's. Can you go soon?"

"Yes, soon; but first I must tell Miss Esther. She will not be pleased."

"She will miss you?"

"Yes, I have lived with her for seven years, and she has been very kind to me."

"But she will let you go?"

"Oh, yes; I will go. Come with me and we will tell her together."

Leading her big captive, Tekla went straight to the library. Miss Esther smiled at the pair as they entered, and said indulgently, "Well?"

"He has come to marry me," said Tekla.

"So he told me," said Miss Esther. "Who is he?"

"I am Adolf Hecksher—" began the accepted suitor.

"And he has three hundred and twenty acres," interrupted Tekla, "and he wants to marry me."

"I understand that," said Miss Esther, "but where did you find him or where did he find you?"

"It was an advertisement," said Tekla, "and—"

"What!" exclaimed Miss Esther, "you answered an advertisement? a matrimonial advertisement!"

"It was in one of those papers Lieutenant Adams sent with the cast," asserted Tekla, "and it cost but a dollar."

Miss Esther smiled. "He 's big enough to be worth it," she said.

"Yes, ma'am," and Tekla looked at the giant beside her, "he is."

"But I don't understand," pursued Miss Esther. "Did that dreadful matrimonial agency send this man to you? Have you ever seen him before? Do you know who he is?"

"Yes," said Tekla; "he is Adolf Hecksher."

"You are a little fool," said Miss Esther. "Leave the room and I will talk with your Adolf Hecksher myself."

Tekla left the room, smiling. Miss Esther invited her guest to be seated, and in the next half hour satisfied herself from the credentials which he produced in the shape of savings-bank books, deeds of property, and a draft which he had received from the last lot of cattle which had been shipped to Chicago, that he was at least in a position to take care of a wife. She promised to communicate with the people whom he had named as references in the little Nebraska town where he lived. This matter being disposed of, Miss Esther again rang the bell

for Tekla. "It is all right," she said, "and you may ask Mr. Hecksher to stay to dinner with you if you wish."

"Yes, ma'am," said Tekla.

As Miss Esther passed through the kitchen shortly before dinner, Tekla showed her the picture she had cut from the paper.

"That is what my farm will be like," she said. "There will be cows and sheep and many, many acres — and Adolf."

Miss Esther returned to the veranda. "It is very nice for them," she thought; "but where can I find another Tekla?"

IV

Did you ever see the picture of we three? — *Twelfth Night.*

After several trials Miss Esther succeeded in obtaining a maid who, while she was not another Tekla, seemed capable of following in her footsteps. In most respects the new maid was competent and satisfactory, but in the matter of afternoon tea Miss Esther had found some difficulty in having her instructions rightly carried out. Afternoon tea was rather unusual in Whitfield, except as a special function. It was only at the Adams house that tea was served every afternoon at five o'clock, whether guests were present or not, but the custom appealed to Miss Esther because in the English novels she had read it had been such an attractive feature. Consequently tea was served every day at five o'clock — in winter in the library, and in summer on the veranda.

The mistress of the house was punctilious as to the appointments of her tea service, and

Tekla, who was after all but a reflection of Miss Adams, had found no difficulty in pleasing her. But Nora, the new maid, had not yet learned to appreciate the vital importance of synchronizing the time and the tea.

As a consequence of this, Miss Esther had sometimes to arrange or rearrange her own tea-table. And so when Jean Richards came flying across the lawn one warm afternoon, she found Miss Esther fussing over her alcohol lamp with her usual calm a little bit ruffled.

"Tea ready?" she called out.

"No, it is not. That good sister in the kitchen is making a bondmaid and a slave of me. She has n't toasted the muffins."

"Let me take them out and toast them."

"No, you can't. They 're already buttered."

"Oh, well, never mind. We 'll eat them as they are. What are you playing to-day, Miss Esther?"

"To-day I am Katherine. Nora is enough to make a shrew of anybody."

"Well, I'm sure you're Bonny Kate, and not Kate the Curst. May I take this chair or is Petruchio sitting in it?"

"He has already risen, that you may have it. Sit down."

Jean sat down suddenly, as she always did everything, and took her cup of tea from Miss Esther.

"This is the very nicest part of the day's work," she said, "drinking tea here with you. I wonder if the other girls are coming."

"I hope so," said Miss Esther; "I haven't seen Helen for a week."

"Helen's got the blues," said Jean. "She's had 'em for three days."

"What's the matter this time?" asked Miss Esther; "or is she just having the blues from a sense of duty?"

"That's it," said Jean, cheerfully. "It's her make-up, you know. She has to have the blues about once in so often to live up to that temperament of hers. I'm glad I haven't any."

"Yes. It is a fearful thing to have to

entertain a temperament. Don't ever acquire one, Jeanie."

"No, ma'am," said Jean, submissively; "I would n't have one of the ridiculous things. People don't like people with temperaments."

"Nonsense," replied Miss Esther; "everybody likes Helen."

"Not as much as they like me," said Jean, comfortably sipping her tea.

"Well, if they don't," said Miss Esther, stoutly, "it is Helen's own fault. She likes so few people."

"That 's just what I said; and that 's the fault of her everlasting temperament."

Jean leaned back in her chair and happily munched her untoasted muffin.

"Now just look at the two of them," she said, as two girls came in at the gate. "Could n't you tell at a glance which one has the blues? Helen looks as though she owned all the indigo mines in India, or wherever it comes from. Anybody could see, though, that Lillian has n't a blue to her name."

But if Helen Fairbanks had the blues they were certainly rather becoming to her than

otherwise. As she approached the house, trailing her parasol listlessly along the walk, she was apparently paying no attention to her companion, who was pointing enthusiastically toward the distant landscape.

Helen Fairbanks's sponsors in baptism had disagreed as to the child's name. Her father had insisted on Pearl, but her mother had finally carried the day, and had given to her daughter the only name which absolutely fitted her. Tall, fair, graceful, statuesque, Helen Fairbanks's beauty was of that classic perfection which is inevitably associated with the name of Helen. Her large, calm, gray eyes which had never yet lived up to the possibilities of their dark lashes, her golden hair which she wore a bit too smooth, her mouth which showed all too seldom the little curves at its corners, were trustworthy indexes of her beautiful but cold nature. Miss Esther had said of Helen that she reminded her of Cassius:

"Seldom he smiles; and smiles in such a sort,
As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit
That could be mov'd to smile at any thing."

As for Lillian Hastings, she was as unlike Helen as Helen was unlike Jean. But the three were united in their friendship for each other and their admiration of Miss Esther, which amounted almost to adoration. Lillian was an artist; that is, she was by every implication of her being, by every wish and desire of her soul, and by every intent of her strong and somewhat stubborn character. The mere fact that owing to limited opportunities she had not as yet achieved much on canvas, in no way contradicts the statement that she was an artist. She had spent two blessed weeks one summer at Shinnecock, and there fallen under the direction of Chase and his associates. There the impulse had its beginnings — possibly from the inspiration of the instructors, possibly because of the fact that she met there other girls who, so they had told her, could paint no better than she did when they began, but who now, after three years of work, had had the distinction of really selling a picture. So her ambition formed itself into an absolute mania for definite accomplishment.

During those two weeks a great artist had asked her to pose for him, and he had painted her portrait. "Gad!" he had said to his friends, afterward, "she's built like a greyhound. Her figure is the figure of a girl of eight — grown up. Her hair is Burne-Jones's ladies' hair, and her complexion — well, I tried to paint it here, but I have n't got the transparency of it yet."

"Who is this paragon?" his friends had asked him.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "I forgot to ask her name. She was just a painter girl, working with the others down there on Peconic Bay."

And so Lillian had kept on painting. She had a studio which was an honest work-room, without draperies, plaster casts, or cosy corners, and here she worked doggedly, perseveringly, and without a moment's doubt as to her ultimate success. She understood herself. She had no false or flattering opinions of her own ability, but she was sure that intelligent effort, properly directed, would lead her eventually to the Roman Road.

"Confide in us, Helen, dear," cried Jean as the two came up the steps. "Why so blue and wan, fair lady? Is it your doll or tea-set that's broken to-day?"

"Neither," said Helen, briefly.

"Perhaps it's her heart," suggested Lillian.

"Not Helen's," returned Jean; "she has n't any heart."

Helen sat down on the wicker settee beside Miss Esther, with a look of patient exasperation.

"Oh, it's nothing," she said, "only another proposal; that's all."

"It's a perfect shame," said Miss Esther, "the way those men bother you."

"It is," said Jean. "Why don't you hang out a sign, 'No Others Need Apply'?"

"I think it's awfully hard on Helen," said Lillian, sympathetically; "she's so kind-hearted, she hates to say 'no' to a goose."

"And yet they keep her saying it most of the time," said Jean.

"Who is it this time?" asked Miss Esther.

"Mr. Walker," said Helen.

"The young man who is staying at Bradstreet's?"

"Yes, that pretty boy with the glasses," said Jean. "He came here for health, and he found Helen, and now he wants to take them both back to New York."

"But you've always said you'd like to live in New York, Helen."

"Yes, Miss Esther, but I did n't mean with Mr. Walker."

"Why not?" asked Miss Esther, straightforwardly. "Why don't you like Mr. Walker?"

"Because there's nothing to like about him. He has no more to recommend him than — than — "

"Than any of the Whitfield men who have asked you to marry them?" queried Jean.

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean, Jeanie, as nobody knows better than you do."

"Yes," said Jean, with an exaggerated sigh. "I, too, have my troubles. It's a fearful thing, girls, to be belles of society, with no society to be belles of."

"And who are you, my girl," asked Miss Esther, "that you scorn Whitfield society? Pray what sort of people would you like, if given your choice?"

"Oh, a lot of gay people," said Jean, "at some kind of a summery place, with lovely clothes, and hops, and bathing-suits. And beautiful men in white flannels, and automobiles, and — and — everything!"

"Modest child! With such easily gratified tastes, it's a pity they cannot be realized."

"Oh, they will be, sometime," said Jean. "What would you choose, Lillian?"

"Oh, I don't care for a lot of people, but if I just had one — "

"A nearer one still, and a dearer one?" asked Jean.

"No, what I mean is some fairy godmother or grandmother or great-grandmother who would take me abroad and let me see pictures — and paint them."

"It's your turn next, Helen," said Miss Esther.

"I," said Helen, slowly, "want nothing more nor less than a castle in Spain, but it

must be the largest and handsomest castle there is in Spain, and it must be my own."

"Anybody there with you?" asked Jean.

"Yes, I think so; one of Miss Esther's best Galahads or Romeos."

"I hope you 'll find your castle," said Miss Esther, looking at Helen with keen appreciation. "You would make an admirable châtelaine."

V

Love, lend me wings to make my purpose swift,
As thou hast lent me wit to plot this drift.
— *Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

In her library that evening Miss Esther's thoughts came back to Helen and her castle in Spain.

"She ought to have one," she thought. "She 's just the girl for a castle in Spain, — no, not exactly in Spain, — a Joyous Gard would suit her better. There should be a maze and a pleasaunce, and a mailed knight should come on his charger to beg for her glove, that he might joust for it in the Field of the Cloth of Gold. She would have made a wonderful Iseult, with a touch of Morgan le Fay. She is wonderful enough as it is, and it is a shame that there are no available Apollos or Abelards or Aucassins who want châtelaines for their castles."

It is clearly to be seen that Miss Esther fully appreciated the fact that the ultimate ambition of the eternal feminine is the

individual interpretation of that ubiquitous architectural structure known as a castle in Spain. This is distinctly opposed to the masculine attitude of mind which looks only for the Princess at the Window.

Though not definitely conscious of this differentiation, Miss Esther was building in her imagination various castles for Helen, when it suddenly occurred to her that the Prince would provide the castle, could she but find the Prince.

"Tekla found her Prince for herself," thought Miss Esther, smiling as she remembered the big brunette Thor; "but one could scarcely imagine Helen applying to a matrimonial agency. I might apply for her, select a suitable Prince, and deposit him on her doorstep the way that Adolf man was dropped here."

The whimsical idea pleased Miss Esther's fancy, and she went into it in detail. "While I 'm about it," she thought, "I may as well select Princes for Jean and Lillian, too. This thing is not without precedent. Petruchio was brought and dropped at Katherine's feet

by outside influences. If I can help Helen, I'm going to do it. If she wants a castle, she's going to have it, and if, as Tekla's experience seems to prove, a matrimonial bureau is a necessary factor in the case — I'll *be* one!"

The beauty of the plan grew upon Miss Esther. The possibilities widened as she thought about it, and she grew so excited that she found herself walking about the library, peering into the bookcases and making quick, explosive remarks to her friends:

"You, Henry the Eighth, you ought to appreciate what I'm doing! You were nothing but a matrimonial bureau yourself!" and she shook her fist at the worn, leather-backed volume. "And you, Don Quixote, if you had applied to a matrimonial bureau, you would have found your old Dulcinea without any trouble, and you would n't have had to fight those ridiculous windmills."

"Yes, I'll be a matrimonial bureau — a first-class one, and I'll apply to myself for Princes for those three girls — and I'll get them, too!"

"Dr. Isaiah Bushnell," announced Nora, appearing at the library door; "do you want to see him?"

"Of course she does," said the Reverend Doctor Bushnell, affably, as, rubbing his hands, he walked past Nora into the room.

"How do you do, Dr. Bushnell. Pray be seated. You find me very busy to-night."

"Ah, yes, my dear Miss Adams, 't is a busy world; but work is a blessing; as one of our poets has it, 'T is better to have — better to have —' but there, I have no doubt you know the quotation. You are so familiar with the flowers of poesy."

"I fear I cannot place the quotation you refer to," replied Miss Esther, a little coldly.

"Ah, well, 't is no matter, 't is no matter. How often our memory fails us just as we need it most. It was only yesterday that I intended to approach you in reference to a most unfortunate affair which has been brought recently to my attention. But, ah, that fickle memory again. The little errand entirely escaped my mind, but to-night, as I was passing your beautiful home, and

remembered that here dwelt the most charitable of women, I said to myself, 'I will ask her!' That, my dear Miss Adams, is my errand."

"Is it?" said Miss Esther; "and how much money do you want?"

"Please do not be so abrupt, dear lady. Let me state the case. Let me tell you of the destitution —"

"Never mind the destitution, Dr. Bushnell, I will contribute to your cause, but as I said, I am extremely busy this evening."

"Ah, yes indeed, yes indeed! and can I not help you? The benefit of my wider experience is yours for the asking. Let me advise and assist."

"Do," said Miss Esther, with sudden cordiality. "I should be glad of your help. Does your wide experience embrace the organization of a matrimonial agency?"

"Ah, you jest," said Dr. Bushnell, a little stiffly; "surely you cannot mean to resort to such methods. You, who are destined to fill so nobly the niche in which Providence has placed you!"

The matter being presented to her in this light, Miss Esther perceived a certain humor in the situation that had not appealed to her before.

"Oh, if you advise against it, I will drop all thought of such a thing."

"I do, my dear Miss Adams," said Dr. Bushnell, earnestly. "Trust to my maturer judgment. It would be a mistake to take any such step, I do assure you. As I was reading yesterday, in my collection of famous poetry, 'T was ever thus — ' ah, again the flowing numbers have escaped me. But you know — doubtless you know the lines. Now, as you were saying, my dear Miss Adams, every little counts, and your contribution will be gladly welcomed not only by myself, but by the worthy people whom we are endeavoring to assist. If you will pardon my abrupt departure, I will, upon the receipt of your beneficence, take my leave."

Once again by herself, Miss Esther's mind returned to her daring scheme.

"Let me see," she thought, "young Put-

nam Adams must be about thirty now, and the Adamses are good enough Princes for anybody. I wonder how he would do for Helen. But no. A lieutenant in the regular army would never be able to provide the kind of a castle that ambitious girl insists upon. He would suit Jean better. She loves uniforms and a gay life; her happy disposition would be a fair match for his. In fact, the more I think of it, the more appropriate it seems. But I have n't seen Putnam of late. The last time I saw him was when he was graduated at West Point, and that was six years ago. Since then he has been stationed in Manila, and goodness knows where else. Now all this may have made a man of him, and then, again, it may not, but he is an Adams, and he has won his shoulder-straps since he went away, so I think the boy must be all right. At any rate, I will invite him up here. I wonder if he will come."

Having satisfactorily settled Jean's future, Miss Esther turned her attention to the next name on the records of her matrimonial agency.

"Lillian," she thought, "is so different from Jean. She takes everything so seriously — even that ridiculous art of hers. Well, perhaps ridiculous is n't the word, for Lillian is not the sort that paints calla-lilies on a black background. She goes only so far, but every step she takes is just right; the trouble is that 's as far as she goes, and she never will get far enough to know that she can't go any farther. A woman has no business with art, anyway. There never was one that did anything really worth while. I 'm glad nobody 's here to say George Eliot at me, or Rosa Bonheur, or Chaminade. Sporadic instances count for nothing except to prove the rule. And I think that Lillian would be much happier married to some good, kind fairy godfather than going to Europe with some fairy godmother.

"But Putnam Adams would never do for Lillian — no, he is better for Jean. Lillian should have an older man — I don't know why, for Lillian is no older than Jean, and yet it seems to me that the man who would be just the one for Lillian Hastings would be

a kind, wise, staid sort of man — who would guide, counsel, and befriend her, and then if he thought she ought to go on with her art work, I 'm sure I 'd be perfectly willing. Then the responsibility of that girl would be off my mind. Now all I 've got to do is to find that man. I wish there had been one in Whitfield, but as there is n't, I must get him somewhere else. It 's positively maddening to think that there are probably hundreds of them in the world, if I only knew their addresses."

Miss Esther possessed an absurd but absolutely unshakable belief in the way-pointing possibilities of the nearest available piece of printed matter.

She calmly picked up the morning paper with the certainty that she would find in it some indicating arrow pointing toward the material manifestation of the man whose image she had so clearly in her mind. It was part of her method to accept the first hint that could by any possibility be made available for her use as an accomplished fact.

"This will do nicely," she said: —

A PHILANTHROPIC BEQUEST

Hiram Briggs Founds an Art School — The Wealthy Button Manufacturer Dedicates His New Edifice — Cost $500,000 — A Memorial to His Late Wife.

—"That 's the one," said Miss Esther, decidedly. "I need look no further. A man who is loving enough to erect such a memorial to his dead wife, and who is rich enough to spend $500,000 on it, and who is clever enough to have got rich on buttons, and who is sensible enough to be named Hiram Briggs, is just the man to take care of that artistic temperament of Lillian Hastings. He will act as a blender to her sharply colored views of life. Where does this altogether desirable man live? I will write to him to-night. Of course, Lillian may object to the buttons, but when she realizes Mr. Briggs's devotion to Art, she will see the matter in its right light, I am sure."

Miss Esther skimmed through the article quickly and discovered that Mr. Briggs was

a citizen of Nashua, New Hampshire. This was entirely satisfactory, and the further details of the story also confirmed her good opinion of the man.

"He ought to get my letter by the day after to-morrow," she thought, "which will give him ample time to take Lillian abroad this summer. They ought to sail by the fifteenth of August, I should think. And I shall give her one of those lovely traveling-bags furnished with any number of silver things. It must be such fun to find out what they're all for, and I should think her honeymoon would just about give her time enough."

VI

Give up yourself merely to chance and hazard. — *Othello*, iii, 7.

The Matrimonial Bureau had proved successful in meeting the demands of two of its clients, but the third name on its records still baffled Miss Adams. It seemed to her that the only possible mate for Helen Fairbanks was a being so far above and beyond the ordinary mortal that it would be impossible to find him outside the glass doors of her mahogany bookcases.

"He might be in there," she thought, looking toward a favorite corner where the fairy books were, "or even in there," she added, as she glanced at the Thackeray shelf; "but one thing is certain, he never would be in a newspaper, so there 's no use looking there. I suppose he 's in the directory, but I don't know what letter his name begins with, so I can't find him there. I don't know how I shall find him. I don't

believe there are many of that type of men in the world. The only one I ever knew was a woman. Cousin Emily Westcott — of the Chester Adams branch — is just the kind of person I mean. It 's a pity she is a woman, though of course she is too old for Helen. Let me see, — Cousin Emily must be sixty by now; she had four boys, and nice, well-behaved young chaps they were. I wonder if they are all married. I remember sending Roger his piece of the old Adams silver two years ago, and Emily wrote that Hugh was engaged. Still, that leaves two, and if they take after their mother they 're just the kind of men I want. I will write to her, too, and I 'm sure one of them will be all right for Helen. They 're Adamses, anyway."

The president of the Matrimonial Bureau now resigned the chair in favor of the secretary, and Miss Esther began the clerical work. She wrote first to Lieutenant Putnam Adams and invited him to spend his vacation with her that summer. " I do not know," she wrote, " whether the state of

the country is such as to allow officers of the army anything like vacations, but if there is any for you this summer, please come up and visit your old cousin. I have n't seen a real live Adams for a long time, and I want to thank you for the cast. Even if your visit must be a short one, I hope you can come, and come soon."

To her cousin Emily Westcott Miss Esther wrote very frankly, saying that Lieutenant Putnam Adams was coming to visit her, and asking that one of the two younger Westcott boys come at the same time. She informed Mrs. Westcott that she wished her to send the one who was most distinctly an Adams, and said further that she would trust the mother's judgment in the matter.

"But they 're *all* Adams — both of them!" exclaimed Mrs. Westcott, as she read this letter. "I 'll have to send them both!"

Miss Esther's letter to Hiram Briggs, the philanthropist of Nashua, was a more trying ordeal. For once in her life she found it difficult to express herself, and it was nearly

midnight when she completed the following business-like if unconventional epistle: —

WHITFIELD, June 22.

MR. HIRAM BRIGGS, NASHUA, N. H.

DEAR SIR, — I have just read in the morning paper an account of the art school which you have founded. I have been thinking the matter over, for I am much interested in such philanthropic movements, and I have a special reason for a peculiarly personal interest in this one.

It is apparent, from the facts stated in the account of your worthy undertaking, that you are an art patron, and are therefore alive to the possibilities in the development of the artistic effort. I am quite certain that a man with the name of Hiram Briggs, and who is the proprietor of a button manufactory, must be possessed of sound common sense and fully able to appreciate and understand the proposition which I am about to make.

I have a young girl friend who believes that she is well on the way toward becom-

ing a great artist, and who certainly has the artistic temperament. Her ambition is to go abroad for the study of art, but at present she has not the means to do this.

From the fact that the praiseworthy memorial which you have built must have taken several years to complete, I assume that Mrs. Briggs must have long since been laid to rest. My young friend is eminently fitted to assist in the carrying out of the plans which you have evidently made for this great work which you have begun, and further, her education and accomplishments are such as to enable her to take her place in any social sphere.

I trust, my dear Mr. Briggs, that you will receive this communication in the spirit in which it is written, and if at any time you wish to call on me I should be pleased to welcome you to my home in Whitfield.

Most sincerely yours,

ESTHER ADAMS.

The next morning Miss Esther was favored with a visit from her young neighbor,

Jack Remington. Jack was a social character and often dropped in, apparently for no particular reason. These fortuitous calls were liable to happen on baking days, or when he felt the need of Miss Esther's moral support in his seasons of tribulation. Ten years old, sturdily built, stolidly minded, he was of the stuff of which Lincolns are made, rather than Michael Angelos or Robert Brownings. Miss Esther had been obliged to recognize this fact, but she still hoped to train his young ideas into grooves of her own choosing. Though as yet no visible progress had been made, she did not despair, but continued in a course which gave her much pleasure and did not bother Jack.

The boy had a passion for battle-ships, and his highest ambition was to build one. He had already begun it, but obstacles often confronted him, and he depended on Miss Esther both for advice and for more material assistance. She did not know much about battle-ships, but her elementary knowledge was supplemented by furtive consultations of the encyclopedia between Jack'

visits. Afterward, she conversed on these subjects with much erudition, and Jack's admiration grew, for she was the only woman of his acquaintance who even knew on which end of a ship the bow was placed. Miss Esther really cared very little about the technical construction of any ship, but she was fond of the boy and had her own notions as to his future career. Of these notions Jack was entirely aware, but since, in his opinion, they were totally unnecessary to a builder of ships, he ignored them with the superiority of a ten-year-old.

With a view to gracious influences, the would-be architect of Jack's fortunes had endeavored to induce a friendship between him and a golden-haired siren of four, who was her neighbor on the other side. Her name was Amabel, but for obvious reasons she was known as Chub. Miss Esther's efforts toward the foundation of this friendship had resulted disastrously. On their first introduction the children had cordially approved of each other, and Amabel had not changed her mind. But just as the friendship

was ripening, Jack discovered Chub's calamitous ignorance concerning the necessity for guns on battle-ships. She had promised to sail with him on his to the great naval battle which he assured her was imminent. More, she had promised to assist in any capacity in the working of the ship, when, in an impulsive burst of generosity, Jack responded that she might man one of the guns.

"Gunth!" and Chub suddenly sat down on the floor and shrieked. Her terror-stricken squeals brought Miss Esther to the scene. She looked from the screaming baby on the floor to the disdainful ship-builder, who stood with his legs apart and his hands in his pockets, surveying the disturbance with an expression of absolute disgust.

"If she yells like that when I say guns," said he, contemptuously, "I wonder what she 'll do when the shooting begins."

"Thooting!" exclaimed Chub, her demonstrations checked for the moment, "who we going to thoot?"

"The enemy," said Jack, tersely.

"Won't it hurt 'em?"

"It 'll *kill* 'em!"

Chub's wails began again with redoubled force. "Take her away," said Jack. He turned to continue the building of his warship with the fixed resolve that henceforth and forever womankind should have no part or parcel in his life.

But the young misanthrope made an exception of Miss Esther Adams. He relied implicitly upon her knowledge and judgment, not only in nautical matters, but regarding all the vicissitudes which beset his somewhat strenuous existence. His mother always accompanied the application of court-plaster with a reproof. When Miss Esther bound up his wounds, a delectable doughnut added largely to the healing qualities of her ministrations.

On this particular morning, however, the doughnut was of minor importance. He ate it, and even abstractedly took a second one, but without enthusiasm. Not observing any necessity for sticking-plaster, Miss Esther concluded the distress was mental and awaited developments.

Jack wriggled into one of the big veranda chairs opposite Miss Esther, and with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands stared moodily into space. Miss Esther waited.

"I got to be a minister," he said at last.

"Have you, dear? When?"

"Soon 's I 'm big enough. 'T ain't fair, jes' 's I got my ship most done, and was goin' to be a sailor like Dewey or somebody, and now I got to be an old minister; mother told me so las' night."

"But perhaps you 'll like being a minister," suggested Miss Esther.

"No sirree! I bet I won't. I know the stunt. I was over to Dr. Bushnell's jes' now, and I asked him what a fellow had to do to be a minister, but he said, don't be 'reverent, little boy, and I was n't. But I know my own self what they got to do. Preach and bury people and marry 'em and baptize kids and have prayer-meetin's and donations and wear high hats and never smoke nor go to circuses nor go in swimmin,' — least I never seen Dr. Bushnell in, — and where 's

any fun in all that, I'd like to know. But they was another man there a-visitin' the minister, and he asked me what I wanted to be, and I told him a sailor and he said 's that so. And I told him you and me was a-buildin' a battle-ship and asked him to come over 'n see it and he said he would and he 's comin' to-morrow mornin' and he give me this card with his name on it."

The name on the card was

THEODORE WINTHROP BREWSTER.

Although the surname meant nothing to Miss Esther, she remembered that there had been a Theodore Winthrop in her mother's line. "Possibly he may be of that family," she thought.

"I wish mother 'd let me be a sailor," went on Jack, wistfully.

"Well, wait until Mr. Brewster comes over here to-morrow," said Miss Esther, "and we 'll see what he thinks about it."

Jack, much comforted at the thought of a possible escape from the reverend calling, went whistling to the kitchen, where he

enjoyed another doughnut with an appetite unhampered by a depressed mentality.

"It would be strange," said Miss Esther, still looking at the card she held, "if this man were one of our Winthrops. I don't remember the Brewster connection, but I'll look it up in the book."

VII

My noble and well warranted cousin.
— *Measure for Measure*, v, 1.

When a telegram arrived announcing that Lieutenant Adams accepted his cousin's invitation, Miss Esther was greatly pleased, and at once began a pleasant flurry of preparation for his reception. A letter following the next day told how exceedingly welcome her invitation had been, and how it was necessary for him to leave Fort Monroe on sick leave for a time. "Your letter," he wrote, "could not have reached me at a time when the prospect of a few weeks in the country was more attractive. In working out on the ramparts where we have been taking down the old guns, I slipped, and broke my leg. I had planned to go into the mountains of Virginia. I have changed my plans. I am coming to you. All I want is rest in a quiet place where my foolish leg can get well. I have already telegraphed,

and I may reach Whitfield on the same day with this letter, for I am going north to-night. I can get about on crutches fairly well. Thank you again for the inspiration which led you to ask me to come."

Miss Esther was pleased rather than otherwise at her cousin's misfortune, for she was a born nurse and dearly loved to fuss over an invalid, and, moreover, she could keep him longer and use him to better advantage in the accomplishment of her fell project.

Miss Esther knew, however, that a broken leg did not necessarily affect a man's appetite, so she enjoyed stocking her larder with the lavishness which always characterized her hospitality. It was in the midst of these preparations that a letter arrived from Nashua.

NASHUA, N. H., June 24.

MISS ESTHER ADAMS,

DEAR MADAM, — Mr. Briggs received your letter yesterday, and wishes me to thank you for your kind words. He especially appreciates your commendation of his philanthropic efforts, and wishes all

success to your young friend in her pursuit of art.

He regrets his inability to accept your kind invitation to call on you at Whitfield, and assures you that he received your proposition quite in the spirit in which it was written.

Mr. Briggs and myself have just returned from our wedding trip, and unite in sending you hearty good wishes for the future success of your own philanthropic plans. I am, my dear Miss Adams,

Very sincerely yours,
EMMELINE FISHER BRIGGS,
(MRS. HIRAM BRIGGS.)

"Just returned from their wedding journey!" exclaimed Miss Esther. "I should have written Mr. Briggs at least two months ago. Well," she went on, cheerfully, "I must get somebody else for Lillian. And it's just as well, too, for 'Lillian Briggs' was n't a very pretty name; but I did want her to sail in August. I shall have to hurry. Let me see what I can do—"

"Hullo, Aunt Esther," called Jack from the driveway, "I 've got Mr. Brewster to come to see the ship."

Miss Esther rose to greet the big blond man who accompanied Jack, and shook his hand cordially.

"I am assured," began Mr. Brewster, "by my young friend, Mr. Remington, that any friend of his is welcome at the Adams house."

"Not only that," said Miss Esther, graciously, "but I have reason to think that your family and mine are connected, and that I may welcome you as a sort of relative. You are a Winthrop?"

"My mother was a Winthrop," said Mr. Brewster, "of the Gideon Winthrop branch."

"And my mother," said Miss Esther, "was a Winthrop of the Wingate Winthrops. But of course, a few generations back they were identical, and I claim you as a relative."

"I am very glad to be claimed," responded Mr. Brewster, with a touch of foreign-mannered courtesy which Miss Esther afterward discovered was characteristic of the man.

"Providential," thought Miss Esther. "Here is Mr. Briggs's substitute ready-made to my hand."

"Then, Aunt Esther," interrupted Jack, "that makes Mr. Brewster my uncle, don't it? And now can he go see our ship?"

Miss Esther acquiesced, and Mr. Brewster and Jack went at once to the large room on the second floor which had been given over to the young ship-builder.

Then Nora brought the tea-table, and Miss Esther supervised the arrangement of her beloved cups and saucers, and when the two enthusiasts returned from the inspection of the ship, they found the hostess surrounded by three chattering girls.

"Hullo, Jean!" cried Jack, "come on up and see my ship."

"Is the rudder working properly yet?" the young lady inquired, but before he could answer, Miss Esther presented Mr. Brewster to Helen, Lillian, and Jean.

"I 'm so glad to meet you, Mr. Brewster," exclaimed Jean. "I 've been longing to meet you all day — ever since I saw you at the

post-office this morning with Dr. Bushnell; but I did n't know you knew Miss Adams."

"I did n't until half an hour ago, but she, too, has been kind enough to say that she was glad to meet me; though she did n't say she had been longing for it all day."

"But she did n't see you at the post-office," said Jean.

"No," said Miss Esther, "but if I had I should n't have waited for an introduction until now, for he is one of our own Winthrops."

"I bet that 's Cousin Putnam coming now," exclaimed Jack, watching a carriage turning in at the gate.

"Who 's Cousin Putnam?" asked Jean, as Miss Esther hurried down the steps.

"Oh," explained Jack, ecstatically, "he 's Aunt Esther's cousin and he 's a lieutenant in the army with a uniform and a sword and he knows all about war and navies and ships and he was in Cuba with General Kent and he was in Manila after Dewey was there, and he saw Dewey once, 'cause he wrote Aunt Esther so, and he 's had fights with natives

and things and he 's going to tell me all about the ships, 'cause Aunt Esther said she 'd make him, and he fell on a fort where he lives down South somewheres and he bust his leg and he 's come here to get well — and everything." Jack paused for want of further breath as the carriage drove up, when he flew down the steps exclaiming, "Hello, Cousin Putnam! Why did n't you wear your uniform?"

Seeing Lieutenant Adams's crutches, Mr. Brewster followed Jack and offered his assistance.

Notwithstanding Lieutenant Adams's ability to manage his crutches, he was glad of Brewster's support. Miss Esther had scarcely more than spoken to her cousin when she was surprised by seeing another carriage closely following the first.

"More company!" cried Jack. "Who is it, Aunt Esther?"

As the second carriage stopped, two young men jumped out, exclaiming, "Here we are. Mother sent us. She said you wanted us. You 're our Cousin Esther, are n't you?"

"Goodness! are you Emily's boys? and what are the two of you doing here?"

"Why you sent for us, did n't you? Mother telegraphed us to stop here on our way home. Did n't you get our telegram saying we 'd be here to-day?"

"No, I did n't; but I 'm just as glad to see you. Come right in. Which of you is Kenneth?"

"I am. I am Kenneth Adams Westcott, and he is Mark Adams Westcott. He 's a little older than I am, but I 'm a whole lot nicer than he is."

"You look like the Adamses," said Miss Esther, as she led the way up the steps and straight to the group around the tea-table.

When Brewster reached the veranda with Lieutenant Adams, he suddenly realized that the responsibility of the hospitality of the house of Adams devolved upon him. He presented the newcomer to the young ladies and Jean promptly shared the honors with Mr. Brewster. She appropriated the bronzed invalid, and impressing Brewster into her service, she ordered from him successive

relays of tea and muffins with which to regale her newly acquired subject, when she saw Miss Esther approaching with what seemed like two new worlds to conquer.

Miss Esther introduced the Westcott boys to Lillian and Helen, and then bringing them over to Jean, begged her to make tea for them.

This effervescent young woman was in her element. With four newly made and evidently admiring acquaintances, she fairly bubbled with excitement, and wondered how Helen and Lillian could take it all so calmly.

"It's a funny thing," said Miss Esther, looking proudly at the four young men, "to think that for years not a single one of my cousins has visited me, and now they come not single spies, but in battalions."

"I think battalions are very nice things," said Jean.

"So do I," replied Miss Esther; "I only wish all my cousins were here."

"There are something like two hundred of them, I believe," said Lieutenant Adams.

"Well, I don't care; I would put up tents on the lawn."

"Won't you have to put up tents for us as it is?" inquired Kenneth Westcott. "You seem to have had an unexpected avalanche of relatives to-day."

"Oh, no, indeed," replied Miss Esther. "The Adams house has plenty of room, and, too, Mr. Brewster is not staying here. He 's a guest of Dr. Bushnell."

"Is this a surprise party to you as well as to us, Miss Esther?" asked Helen.

"*I* was expected," said Lieutenant Adams; "these other scions of the house of Adams are base interlopers, but Cousin Esther wrote me that she specially wanted me to come, and I wrote her that I was coming to-day."

"And mother telegraphed us that Cousin Esther specially wanted us to come," said Mark, "and we telegraphed that we were coming to-day."

"Here comes the telegram now," said Lillian, as the boy from the telegraph-office rode slowly up the driveway on a bicycle.

"Hello, Mercury!" said Jean, as he dismounted from his wheel.

"Ah, gwan!" said the boy, gallantly, as he remounted and rode away.

Miss Esther read the message. "I learn from this," she said, "that my two Westcott cousins are coming to-day to make me a visit."

"Then we're not interlopers any more?" asked Kenneth.

"Not at all. You are honored and expected guests, and I hope you will stay all summer."

"I hope so, too," said Jean.

When Brewster and the three girls went away, Lieutenant Adams said, "Do you often have such tea-parties as this, Cousin Esther?"

"Nearly every afternoon," replied Miss Adams.

"Then we'll all stay all summer," exclaimed the Lieutenant.

"I want you to, anyway, Putnam; and at least one of you other boys," said Miss Esther.

"Why can't my little brother stay, too?" asked Mark.

"Oh, let's all stay," said the Lieutenant, "and I have a friend who's awfully anxious to come to Whitfield for the summer with me, and he's an all-round good fellow, too; besides, he has barrels of money, and he can sing and paint and everything."

"Send for him," said Miss Esther, in a sudden enthusiastic burst of hospitality.

VIII

And wears upon his baby brow the round and top of sovereignty. — *Macbeth*, iv, 1.

Not only because her Cousin Putnam was an Adams, but also because he was a soldier and an invalid, he was invested to Miss Esther's mind with a certain halo of romance. The mere incidental fact that his injury had not been received on the field of battle, but in the more commonplace pursuit of supervising the moving of certain heavy guns from the ramparts of Fort Monroe on a peaceful June afternoon, made no difference in her attitude toward it. She felt that a dearth of woman's tears was just as pathetic in an accident of this sort as in the case of an Algiers hero, and she was resolved that there should be no lack of woman's nursing if she had her way about it. Since he had decided on the career of a soldier and left home for West Point, Putnam Adams had seen enough of woman's tears, for they were

not an unknown commodity in Cuba and the Philippines, but he had had but little experience with the woman's nursing part of the problem. His work had been cut out for him from the very day of his graduation, and when he was finally ordered home and to service at the artillery school at Fort Monroe there had been no thought but the accurate carrying out of the general and special orders of his commanding officer, with, back of it, the firm resolve to take his place at the very front rank of the profession which he loved with that love which comes through generations of trained soldiers — fighters.

And now in one of Miss Esther's dimity-curtained bedrooms he was receiving the gentle motherly care which he had never had since his boyhood years. She did not fuss over him, or at least, if she did, it was with that practical, sensible fussing which carried conviction and brought a sense of absolute peace and rest.

The Westcotts were more easily disposed of. Miss Esther sent them off to bed

as unceremoniously as she would have done ten years earlier had they visited her then. Their rooms boasted as many dimity curtains and the wall-paper as many pink roses as were to be found in Putnam Adams's room across the hall. But these details were entirely lost upon these two healthy young cubs whose physical prowess far outstripped their artistic instinct. They fell asleep without appreciating that the drapery of their couches was the traditional lavender-scented Adams linen.

Having said good-night to her cousins, Miss Esther returned to her library. The immediate success of her plans had surpassed all her expectations. Within four days she had gathered under her own roof four eligible candidates for the hands of the unconscious clients of her Matrimonial Bureau. To be sure, she had only three clients, but it was well to have an extra man in case another client presented herself.

"It seems to me, Portia," she said, "that I have managed this thing quite as well as

even you could have done it. I have laid my plans carefully, and I feel sure that they will work out successfully. Putnam Adams is a dear, and, as I thought, he is just the one for Jean. Winthrop Brewster I am not so sure of. He must be the one for Lillian, for he came almost the very moment after I received the refusal from Hiram Briggs. And Mr. Brewster is apparently very intellectual, though he does n't seem to have any special leaning toward art. The Westcott boys are all right. Either of them is good enough for Helen, and she can take her choice. I don't suppose they have very large castles as yet; but the Westcott fortune is great and there is plenty of time. Yes, things are certainly working out well. The Matrimonial Bureau has already proved its right to existence, and I shall be glad to see my girls married and settled."

With the feeling of satisfaction that comes from an achieved purpose, Miss Esther turned out the library lights and went slowly up the stairs. As she passed Jack's shipyard, she smiled happily. "And after the

weddings are all over," she said, "Jack and I will go on with the building of the ship."

On the east side of the Adams house was a square porch which had been built by Miss Esther's father in order that he might have an out-of-door reading-room when the days of summer made it too warm to remain comfortably in the library. This was now inclosed in vines, — wistaria, honeysuckle, and crimson ramblers, — which gave the place a frisky appearance quite in contrast to the stately effect of the stone-floored, white-columned front porch.

After breakfast next morning Miss Esther formally transferred this desirable bit of property to the boys, and especially to Putnam. For his especial benefit she had arranged a big wicker lounging-chair with a convenient table by its side. Then there were rugs and hammocks, ash-trays, and other things supposed to be necessary to the comfort of the average man. Lieutenant Adams, who found himself after his tiresome journey provokingly helpless, dropped

gratefully into his pillow-filled chair, but the Westcott boys promptly upset the orderly scheme of things which Miss Esther had so happily arranged during the early morning hours. Kenneth picked up a large palm in a pot which he summarily deposited on the lawn outside. Mark pitched the pillows out of the hammocks. "There 's no place for my feet," he said.

Much as Miss Esther had enjoyed arranging these things for the comfort of her guests, she enjoyed still more their high-handed demolishing of that arrangement. "Now have you everything you want?" she asked, beaming on the twelve-feet-six of Westcott humanity that was festooned end to end across the porch.

"All but one thing," said Kenneth, "and that 's some fishing-tackle. I want to go fishing."

"But there 's no place to fish."

"That does n't make any difference. I don't want to fish; I just want to go fishing, and so I want some tackle and bait and a creel and a pair of hip-boots."

"There is a little bit of a brook that runs through the east meadow," said Miss Esther, thinking hard in her endeavor to provide what was wanted. "But there are no fish in it that I know of."

"That will do nicely, thank you. Of course, I would have preferred something with tarpon in it; but a brook is a brook, after all. Where are the things?"

"Father used to have all those things. They're in the big attic now. I'll go and get them."

"Not on your life you won't!" And Kenneth bounced out of the hammock, picked Miss Esther up bodily and carefully deposited her in his place, tucking some pillows about her feet. "I'll get them myself. You stay right there. Watch her, fellows!"

The screen door slammed behind him and Kenneth went in search of his fishing-tackle. He returned triumphantly with the hip-boots and much other paraphernalia which he scattered over the floor, chairs, and also over his hostess, whom he decorated with red and yellow trout flies. Even

after the good lady had escaped and unwillingly obeyed Nora's summons to the kitchen, Kenneth was still fussing with his flies.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Putnam, looking down across the lawn, "what a picture!" Kenneth paused, and, looking through a vine-framed opening, saw an exceeding fat baby propelling herself on all-fours through a too-small aperture in the boxwood hedge. Halfway through she had paused perforce and beamed contentedly. Then redoubling her efforts she wriggled through the rest of the way, stood upright and carefully brushed the dirt from her tiny skirts, and started toward the house. She walked deliberately, as one with a set purpose. At a rose-bush a few feet from the hedge she stopped, kissed one of the roses, patted another lovingly, clasped her fat little hands and stood for a moment in rapt adoration of the flowers. Then she turned and trotted on toward the house.

A small toad hopped in front of her. The baby gave a little squeal, and putting her hands over her eyes, she walked carefully

and deliberately around the toad, leaving plenty of room between them. Contentedly then she came slowly on.

"Hullo, Yellowtop!" called out Mark, who with the others had watched the eventful journey across the lawn.

At this the baby looked up, saw the three strange men, and with a sudden absolute collapse she dropped to the ground where she stood, sitting squarely down, her chubby fingers outstretched on either side of her, and her feet sticking up in front. For a moment she stared blankly at the awful sight before her, and then, opening her mouth wide, there came forth a wail of terror and indignant surprise such as never was on land or sea.

"Bless your baby heart!" said Kenneth, "what in the world's the matter?"

The response to this was another yell, more prolonged and terrified than the first. This brought Miss Esther.

"What are you doing to Chub?" she exclaimed.

"Nothing," said Kenneth, honestly; "she's hollering at me."

"I 'll get her," said Mark, helpfully, and bounding down the steps he picked up the tumultuous morsel of humanity. Pausing in the vocal demonstration of her temper, she resorted to effective pugilism and pounded Mark with her dimpled fists, her blue eyes flashing with the indignation of outraged dignity.

"Don't hit him so hard, Baby," laughed Putnam; "you 'll kill him!"

"Will I?" asked Chub, pausing in her warlike enterprise, and looking straight into Mark's eyes.

"Of course you will," said Mark, reproachfully. "I 'm almost dead now."

"I wath goin' to thtop anyway," said Chub with a final thump on his chest. Then she threw her arms around him as far as they would go and beamed adoringly at him.

From that moment Mark bent his neck to Chub's yoke. Her monarchy was absolute. Anything less than instantaneous obedience occasioned blood-curdling yells that always reduced Mark to sudden subjection, not only in self-defense but for the sake of suffering

humanity. By the time Mark had reached the porch Chub had reached a state of intermittent calm, and submitted with a fine air of condescension to the introductions thrust upon her.

She greeted Lieutenant Adams and Kenneth Westcott pleasantly at Miss Esther's bidding, but allowed it plainly to be seen that she very much preferred Mark's society.

Miss Esther, seeing that Chub was peacefully settled, turned to enter the house.

"Don't go," called Lieutenant Adams after her.

"I must," said Miss Esther; "I have a lot of things to attend to."

"They can wait; I want you. I wish you'd get one of the new magazines and read me a story."

Miss Esther went into the house and soon returned with several magazines. "Here are the books," she said, "but I can't read to you. I have a hundred things to do this morning."

Putnam looked at her calmly. "You are not going to do any of them," he said; "you

are going to stay right straight here with me — and read to me. Sit down in that chair."

Miss Esther sat down, and Putnam regarded her with a look of entire satisfaction. "Any story will do," he said.

She turned the pages, hunting for the most interesting story.

Her mind was slightly distracted by the novel sensation of submitting to irresistible authority. The feeling was distinctly pleasant.

"Romeo could n't have done that," she thought. "A lover is more condoling, but my chief humor is for a tyrant. Well, I 've certainly found one in this dominating cousin of mine."

IX

I pr'ythee, pretty youth, let me be better acquainted with thee. — *As You Like It*, iv, 1.

KENNETH started on his fishing expedition. The road which passed the Adams house wandered aimlessly off toward a woodland, and at the edge of this there was a brook. Here was shade, and fallen trees which offered particularly comfortable seats. As Miss Esther had said, there were no fish now. There had been one once — a very large one — which had been caught, but that was in the days when Miss Esther's father used to fish there. This lack, however, did not cause the least worry to Kenneth. His mood was rather for the manner than the matter in hand. He wanted to fish — not to catch fish, and his mother's pail, had there been nothing else available, would have suggested to him those essential ideas which are of the Waltonian impulse. He wanted

to think, and there is nothing more subtly conducive to the reflective frame of mind than sitting on a log, dangling a fish-line in a brook. If one catches fish, then there is immediate business in hand which spoils a train of thought. Your true philosopher, therefore, desires no fish — he simply wants to sit and think. That is the secret of fishing, and Kenneth Westcott knew it.

Jean Richards, from behind the vines of her own veranda, had watched Kenneth's departure from the Adams house and his subsequent progress toward the brook. "How absurd," she thought, as she noted the rod and creel. "He can't catch anything in that brook. I'll go down and tell him so. I rather like those boys of Miss Esther's. I think I'll cultivate them — the brothers I mean; that lame lieutenant is a prig, I'm sure, but the Westcott boys seem quite worth while. Yes, I'll go down there. He'll be glad of somebody to amuse him when he finds he can't catch any fish."

Jean waited until she thought that Kenneth had had time to discover the fishlessness of

the brook, and then leisurely proceeded along the same path he had taken.

She came upon him suddenly. Seated on the ground, his back against a fallen log, his hands clasped behind his head, and his fish-line trailing in the brook, Kenneth was staring vacantly toward the blue of the sky.

"Good gracious, how you scared me!" cried Jean. "I did n't know you were here."

"I 'm going away in a minute," he replied, as, after a disinterested glance at the intruder, he went on with his sky-gazing.

"Well, of *all* things!" exclaimed Jean. "May I sit here until you go? I'm awfully tired."

"Certainly, sit down if you like. It is n't my log."

Jean sat down. Kenneth continued to gaze at the sky.

"What are you doing?" she asked at last.

"Cleaning my automobile."

"Papa has just got a new buggy," said Jean, ingratiatingly.

"Has he?"

"My father is the manager of the Whitfield Flour and Feed Company."

"Is he?"

"Yes, he is. He thinks I'm nice."

"Does he?"

Jean rested her chin in her hand and regarded the young man steadily for some moments. "Do you know, I rather like you? Nobody ever talked to me like that before."

"Do you like to be talked to that way?" Kenneth glanced critically at his fishing-rod, and moved his position a trifle.

"Yes; who are you, anyway?"

"You know my name."

"Well, what are you, then?"

"I'm a fairy prince."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm hunting a fairy princess."

"How fortunate I happened along just now."

Kenneth rose, picked up his rod, walked a little way and leaned it against a tree.

"Oh, are you going?" asked Jean. "Goodbye!"

"No, I'm not going. I'm coming back to sit on the log and talk to you; but I see an interruption approaching in the shape of two able-bodied men. One of them is our friend, Mr. Brewster."

"And the other is Dr. Bushnell, the minister. Mr. Brewster is staying at his house."

The two newcomers accepted the hospitality offered by the occupants of the log, Brewster throwing himself at full length on the grass, and Dr. Bushnell, carefully selecting an available place, seated himself with great dignity. "What a poetic spot," he said. "It reminds me of that wonderful line of Mrs. Hemans's, 'Men may come and men may go, but I go on forever.' That is a beautiful thought. It is well said that there are sermons in running brooks."

"Why don't you pick one out for next Sunday, Dr. Bushnell?" inquired Jean, with an air of seriousness.

"I think I will. I think I will. That is by no means a bad idea. I thank you, my dear young lady, for suggesting it to me. From a brook one may draw many —"

"Fish," said Jean.

"Not from this brook," said Kenneth. "I've been fishing all the morning and have n't caught a thing."

"I referred to sermons, not fish," remarked Dr. Bushnell, mildly.

"Oh, I did n't have any sermon bait."

"And have n't you really caught anything?" inquired Brewster.

"Only a fairy princess," said Jean.

"And that without any bait," retorted Kenneth.

"Oh, I knew he would n't catch any fish, so I came down to amuse him. We were playing fairy prince and princess."

"Was this log your castle?" asked Brewster, interestedly.

"No, indeed," replied Jean. "I think the fairy prince was going to build a real air-castle, with moats and dungeons and things."

"I don't think that kind of a castle would suit you," said Kenneth.

"What kind would suit me?" asked Jean.

"A more modern one," said Brewster.

"A brownstone front on Fifth Avenue, for instance."

"That would suit me exactly," she replied, "but it is n't a castle."

"Would n't you rather be suited exactly than to have a castle?" said Brewster, quizzically.

"Yes, I would," said Jean, honestly. "Helen is the one for the castle. You know Miss Fairbanks, — you met her yesterday. She has set her heart upon a real castle with turrets and drawbridges and moats."

"She ought to have it, too," said Brewster. "She would grace it perfectly."

"I am grieved to learn," said Dr. Bushnell, "that Miss Helen has set her heart on anything so far beyond her reach. It seems to me not only the height of folly, but almost a sin to aspire to something that one may never hope to gain."

"'Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?'"

quoted Brewster.

"Heaven, my dear sir, is quite another

matter. We may all hope to attain that blessed state."

"True," said Brewster, in such a bland tone of acquiescence that Jean giggled.

"It is not a matter for flippancy," said Dr. Bushnell, with his most ministerial air. "Ambition, rightly directed, and not having its source in a prideful desire for vainglory, is admirable and praiseworthy in all. But ambition that is selfish and based on a desire for vulgar ostentation and display — "

"Helen Fairbanks is not vulgar or ostentatious," broke in Jean. "She does n't want a castle for show. What she wants and what she ought to have is the sort of thing represented by a moated castle. She would fit right into a picture of that kind, and she knows it, and so, naturally, she longs intensely for it. But she is n't miserable over it."

"Of course," said Brewster; "I have only met Miss Fairbanks once, and she certainly gives a stranger the impression of the Haughty Princess. One would hardly imagine her longing intensely for anything."

"That 's only because you don't know her," said Jean. "Her likes and dislikes are extreme. It is not the material castle that she cares for, either. It is simply that she wants to realize her tremendous ideals."

"Just as I said," interposed Dr. Bushnell. "Her ideals are so tremendous that I fear they can never be realized, and therefore I say that it is wrong for her to hold them. It is better to be like you, my dear young lady — contented with your lot and cherishing no overweening ambitions."

"Is that so?" said Kenneth, with much interest. "Do I really see before me an absolutely contented individual?"

"You do not!" said Jean, indignantly, as if content were a thing to be ashamed of. "I have fully as many ideals as Helen, though they are quite different ones."

"What is the chief one?" asked Kenneth; "a fairy prince?"

"No, indeed; I have dozens of fairy princes who await but my nod. My chief desire this morning is for a white chiffon parasol and a maltese kitten."

L. of C.

"They are not exactly in line with the ideals you attribute to Miss Fairbanks," said Brewster.

"No," said Dr. Bushnell, "but they are within the possibilities, and so show a more admirable trait of character, in that your desires are subservient to your probable attainments. Yours is a disposition to be envied."

"I 'll tell Helen that," said Jean. "I would like to have her envy me. It would be such a pleasant change."

"Why, do you envy her?" asked Kenneth.

"I do, indeed. She is so beautiful and stately, and so great-hearted under her apparent calm indifference, and so unswerving in her aims, and so — so fond of kittens."

"But you are that," said Kenneth.

"Yes, but the kittens are fond of her in return — that 's Helen."

"If Miss Helen would confine her ambitions to kittens," said Dr. Bushnell, "it would be so much wiser and better for her. She is a dear girl, but it occasions me much

serious thought when I observe her mistaken tendencies. Does it not seem to you, Mr. Brewster — I ask you now in a general way — does it not seem to you that our extravagant desires, which in the very nature of things are impossible of fulfillment, should be curbed — nay, should be rooted out by the kind hand of friendly counsel?"

"I am sorry that I do not agree with you, Dr. Bushnell," replied Brewster, "but I 'm afraid I must confess to a deep sympathy with Miss Fairbanks, for I myself am a victim of unattainable and often even incomprehensible ideals."

X

If he fail, yet go we under our opinion still that we have better men. — *Troilus and Cressida*, i, 3.

After thinking it all over seriously, Miss Esther had concluded that Mark Westcott and Theodore Winthrop Brewster were the most suitable candidates yet entered on the books of her Matrimonial Bureau for the hand of her artist-client, Lillian Hastings. It had been difficult to choose between them, for they were both distinctly eligible, but after two or three days' acquaintance, she had discovered that Mark possessed more of the traits which might develop into the character of the traditional fairy godfather. In pursuance of her plans, the wily lady one afternoon invented an errand for one unsuspecting youth.

"Mark," she said, ingratiatingly, "would n't you like to go over to Lillian Hastings's for me?"

"Why, are you over there?"

"Don't be saucy. I assumed that you could understand English. I 'll try again. Cousin, or, fair cousin, I would wish you, or, I would request you, or, I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble: but to go, or, to walk, or, to amble withal, to the house, or the home, or the studio of Miss Lillian Hastings, and there with deep diplomacy acquaint thyself with that which I desire. This having done, I bid thee tell me true that which with subtle art thou hast discovered."

"Sure, I 'll go; but what is this tremendous mission?"

"Lillian is painting a picture, and I want to know if it is finished yet."

"But where does the diplomacy come in?"

"You see, I don't want her to know that I want to know, but when the picture is finished, I 'm going to have a party or something for her."

"What is the picture? How am I to know it?"

"It 's a great big field with a cow in the middle."

"All right. I can tell it by the cow, but how am I to know if it is finished?"

"That 's where you must use your ingenuity. Take your time and lead the conversation around by devious by-paths until you find out."

"All right; put me up a little luncheon and I 'll stay all day."

"You have n't any diplomacy," said Kenneth. "I 'll go along with you and manage the ingenious part."

"No, no! You can't go, Kenneth. I want you this afternoon. I want you to take me driving."

"But you can't go driving, Cousin Esther," broke in Lieutenant Adams. "You promised to stay with me. I 've got to have you. Clear out, you two boys, and stay as long as you like."

In the few days of Putnam Adams's stay it had come about that the household obeyed him unquestioningly. Miss Esther realized that Kenneth's going would interfere with her plans, yet there was no escape from the inevitable, and she docilely remained with

Putnam and watched the brothers as they sauntered across the lawn.

They found Lillian at her easel, at work on a large landscape.

"That's the picture, now," exclaimed Mark, diplomatically.

"I told you you had n't any ingenuity," said Kenneth, "and besides that can't be the picture. There is n't any cow in it!"

"There was a cow —" began Lillian.

"How did it get away?"

"I painted it out," replied the artist.

"Then that's the picture. I knew it was," said Mark.

"What picture?"

"We can't tell you. We're diplomats. When will it be finished?"

"It's almost finished now. I think it will be done by Saturday."

"Then that's all right. I'll tell Cousin Esther," said Mark.

"What does she want to know for?"

"We can't tell you. That's a surprise. How can people be diplomats if other people ask them questions all the time?"

"Hullo, who painted this head?" Kenneth had discovered a portrait among a lot of sketches.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Mark, "that looks like the girls."

"What girls?" asked Lillian.

"Our girls," said Kenneth. "We 're engaged to them, you know. Want to see 'em?"

"Yes, indeed. Where are they?"

The boys simultaneously drew from their pockets two thin gold cases each containing a miniature of a young woman.

"Why, these are pictures of the same girl," said Lillian.

"Not exactly," explained Kenneth. "We 've each got one. You see they 're twins."

"I should think they were twins. I never saw anything so much alike in my life. How do you tell them apart?"

"We can't," said Mark. "At least we can tell the girls apart, but not the pictures. They got mixed up once and we 've never known which is which since. But it does n't matter. They can tell us apart."

"Yes, of course, they can tell which of you they are engaged to."

"Yes," said Kenneth, "we have to depend on them to sort us out. But sometimes I think they fool us."

"I know they do," said Mark. "They think it 's a great joke."

"Are you to be married soon?" asked Lillian.

"Yes, there 's to be a double wedding in the fall. Great time — I wish you 'd come to it."

"I 'd love to go. Is Miss Esther going?"

"Oh, I guess so. She came on to Roger's wedding, but she has n't said anything about ours."

"They 're awfully pretty girls. What are their names?"

"Butler — Edna and Edwina. We call them Ed for short."

"How do they know which one you mean?"

"Why, according to who says it. I would n't call Edna 'Ed.'"

"You 'd better not," said Mark. "I 'd pound you if you did."

"Where are they now?" asked Lillian, interestedly.

"They are going on with mother this week from Boston to the Adirondacks, and Mark and I are to join them there later."

Just then Brewster and Helen Fairbanks came into the studio.

"We 've been walking miles and miles," said Helen, "and we 're going over to Miss Esther's for a cup of tea, and we want you to come with us."

"All right," said Mark, "we 'll go. Just wait a few minutes till Miss Hastings paints a cow into her picture."

"Oh, the cow can wait till to-morrow," said Lillian; "but won't you show Miss Fairbanks those two miniatures, or one at least?"

The boys produced the lockets and handed them to Helen. "What a beautiful girl," she said. "Is she your sister?"

"No — she is n't one girl, she 's twins, and she 's engaged to these two brothers here," said Lillian.

"Which is which?" asked Helen.

"Merciful powers!" exclaimed Kenneth, "you have n't mixed them up again, have you? We just got them sorted out."

"Why these are the Butler twins," said Brewster as he looked at the pictures. "I 've known them all their lives; — this is Edna and this is Edwina."

"How can you tell?" asked Mark, admiringly; "but give me Edwina quick, while you know."

"Now I 'm ready," said Lillian, sticking her brushes into an already crowded ginger jar. "Come on, let 's go. It 's almost five."

On the way to the Adams house they passed Dr. Bushnell's. Brewster turned in at the gate. "Go on," he said, "I 'll get the book I promised Miss Fairbanks, and catch you before you get to Miss Esther's."

That afternoon had proved an eventful one for Miss Adams, and had completely disarranged her Matrimonial Bureau.

She had been sitting on the east porch with Putnam, when Nora announced the arrival of three ladies.

"Well, Emily Westcott!" exclaimed

Miss Esther, "I'm so glad to see you. Where under the sun did you come from?"

"I'm on my way to Saranac, and just stopped over for the night to see you and to show you my new daughters. This is Edwina Butler and this is Edna Butler. Where are the boys?"

"I'm very glad to see you — all of you. But why do you call these young ladies your daughters?"

"Why, they're engaged to Mark and Kenneth. Have n't they told you?"

"Mark and Kenneth?" said Miss Esther, "Mark and Kenneth! but which of you is which? How can they tell you apart?"

"They can't," said Edna Butler. "We tell them."

Miss Esther sat down. "Well, of *all* things!" she said.

"Why are you so surprised?" asked Mrs. Westcott. "The boys are old enough. Mark is twenty-five —"

"Yes, yes, I know. And I'm very much pleased, — very much pleased. I am sure," she added, turning to the young ladies,

"that you must be twins. You are, are n't you?"

"Yes, we are; I am Edwina. There 's no way to tell us apart except by our first names. Mark is my special property."

"And Kenneth is mine," said Edna. "He has written so much about you and this beautiful place that we 're perfectly delighted to be here. He told us, too, about numbers of new cousins he had found here. May n't we see them?"

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Esther. "At least we have one of them on exhibition. Your boys have gone calling somewhere, but one of the new cousins — Lieutenant Adams — is on the east porch, laid up with a broken leg. Come out and amuse him for a while."

She took the Butler twins to the east porch, presented Lieutenant Adams, and then returned to Mrs. Westcott. "Those young people can take care of themselves," she said, "and you and I can have a good old-time chat."

"We 've come out to get acquainted,"

announced Edna. "You may not know it, but you are to be one of our new cousins, Lieutenant Adams."

"I 'm very glad to hear that," he said; "but if I 'm your cousin, you must call me Putnam. What 's your name?"

"Mine 's Edna, and hers is Edwina. You may use them, if you like."

"I don't know how I can remember which belongs to which. Your gowns are exactly alike. You ought to have some distinguishing mark."

"All right. Give me one of your gilt buttons," said Edna, "and I 'll wear it on my chain."

"Of course," said Lieutenant Adams, cutting off a button from his white duck coat, which Edna gleefully attached to her long chain.

"I want one, too," said Edwina, "to put on my chain."

"Of course. Here 's one for you."

Edwina strung the button on her chain. "Now shut your eyes," she said, "and count ten."

During the counting Putnam heard an ostentatious rustle and two very similar giggles. Then he announced "Ten!"

"Now look at us," said one of them. "Which am I?"

"That's dead easy; you're Edwina."

"How can you tell?"

"Why, because one of you is so much prettier than the other."

"Which?" cried the twins together.

"Both," said Putnam, gallantly.

"Well, if that doesn't look like Winthrop Brewster," said Edwina, as she saw a tall man in white flannels crossing the lawn.

"It is," said her sister.

"Of course it is," said Putnam. "Do you know him?"

"Yes, known him all our lives. Hullo, Winthrop!"

"Well, Peaches Butler!" exclaimed Brewster as he came up the steps. "How did you get here? You see," he explained to Putnam, "that when I address these young women together I have to refer to them in

the plural. When I meet only one of them I call her Peach."

From the library window Miss Esther could hear the laughter on the east porch. She had left Mrs. Westcott in her room, after hearing from her the details of the boys' engagements.

"Mark and Kenneth both out of it," she thought. "To be sure, I only needed one of them, but I can't have either, it seems. I think the Jean and Putnam affair will turn out as I have planned. Then, of course, I must give Winthrop Brewster to Lillian. That still leaves Helen. She is certainly my most troublesome client. This being a Matrimonial Bureau is harder work than I thought it would be."

XI

He well may be a stranger, for he comes to an honored triumph. — *Pericles*, ii, 2.

AFTER leaving Brewster at Dr. Bushnell's, Mark explained to his companions that he had forgotten to go to the post-office as he had promised Miss Esther he would do. They all went with him. When they reached the Adams house there was no one on the front veranda.

"We 're late," said Helen, "and yet I don't see any appearance of tea-things. I wonder where everybody is?"

"Some fearful accident must have happened in this well-regulated family to have interfered with the tea routine," said Lillian.

"Yes," exclaimed Kenneth, "the fearful accident is Putnam Adams. He has regulations of his own, and he has hypnotized Cousin Esther into thinking that they are hers. He 's probably having tea in that padded cell of his."

"From the racket, I should say he had a whole tea-party," said Mark.

"We 'll invite ourselves to it," said Lillian.

They sauntered slowly toward the porch, Lillian and Mark ahead, and Helen following with Kenneth.

"That 's Mark's laugh," said Edwina. "The boys are coming, Ed."

The Butler twins flew to the vine-framed window and looked out to see Mark and Kenneth apparently very much interested in two merry young women. At the same moment Lillian spied the twin faces in the leafy frame. "There," she cried, "are the girls out of your lockets!"

"Edwina Butler!" yelled Mark, dropping in an astonished heap on the grass. "Whichever one of you belongs to me, come out here — quick!"

"No, you come up here. Are n't you awful glad to see us? We 're a surprise party," said Edwina.

"You certainly are," said Kenneth, bounding up the steps. "What are you doing here, anyway?"

Lillian and Helen followed Kenneth, and Brewster introduced them to the Butler twins. Just as Mark rose to go, too, Jean came around the corner of the house. "Where 's everybody?" she said.

"Up in Putnam's porch," replied Mark. "Come on up."

"Here comes Mark with another girl," said Edwina to Brewster. "Is he making a collection?"

"Yes, I think he is," replied Brewster; "and I admire his taste in gems."

"His latest acquisition seems to be a sparkling one."

"She 's all of that," said Brewster. "Jean Richards is a witch; but I 'm not sure that I would call her Mark's acquisition."

"Is she yours?"

"No, not that either. Lieutenant Adams —"

Just at this moment Mark came up and Edwina lost interest in Brewster's sentence.

"Mark has good taste," thought Brewster, glancing at Miss Butler, "but for myself —"

He deliberately walked across the porch and seated himself beside Helen Fairbanks.

Miss Esther and Mrs. Westcott appeared at the door.

"The Mother!" shrieked Kenneth, and sprang to meet her.

"What a lot of people for tea," said Miss Esther. "We must all go out on the front veranda right away. Everything is ready."

"We are going to have tea here to-day," said Putnam.

He looked at Miss Esther with that air of absolute finality which she had already learned meant ultimate acquiescence on her part; and while she felt it necessary to parley a little, if only for a compromise with her own dignity, yet she was secretly pleased with the positive knowledge that she would capitulate at last. In a word, she enjoyed Putnam's despotism.

"But we always have it on the front veranda. We'll have to go out there," she said.

"No," said Putnam; "it is to be served here. Sit down."

Miss Esther sat down.

"Now, Miss Richards," began Putnam, "you will kindly ask Nora to superintend moving all that tea baggage out here, and you Westcott boys get busy and do the boosting."

Usually Putnam's orders were carried out to the letter, but when Jean reached the front veranda, she was surprised to see a strange young man sitting there. He was a fat little man, who looked as though he might be merry in favoring circumstances. But just now he sat in an attitude of deep dejection, his round face showing a most woe-begone expression.

"Don't cry!" said Jean. "It's all right. What's the matter?"

"Somebody's broke the doorbell, and I can't get in. Sit down, won't you?"

Jean sat down beside him. "I really must be going," she said; "they're waiting for me inside."

"Can't I go in, too? I'm expected. I am Abraham Lincoln Dodd."

Jean regarded him critically. "You don't look like Abraham Lincoln," she said.

"No; I favor the Dodds. We are the

Dodds of Lawrence. We spell our name D-o-double-d. It is pronounced Dodd—the final d is silent."

"How interesting," said Jean.

"Yes, isn't it? Putnam Adams wrote for me to come down here. He said that his Cousin Esther said I might. Are you his Cousin Esther?"

"Oh, no. Miss Adams is a lady of about fifty."

"Yes, so Putnam said."

"Where are you, Miss Richards?" called Mark from the doorway.

"Here I am. Come out and meet Mr. Dodd."

"Certainly," said Mark, dropping down on the top step. "Did Putnam tell you to keep Mr. Dodd out here?"

"We can't get in," said Abraham Lincoln Dodd. "Nobody answered my ring, and I can't find Putnam."

"What's up?" asked Kenneth, coming out after more tea-cups.

"I've found a stranger," said Jean, "and I took him in. Want to see him?"

"She has n't taken me in *yet*," said Dodd, cheerfully.

"She will, though," said Kenneth, sitting down beside his brother. "It 's a happy little faculty Miss Richards possesses. But you 're not a stranger. Putnam expected you."

"Yes, Miss Adams was kind enough to invite me. They said to come as soon as I could, and so I came right away. I drove over from Richfield Springs in my automobile."

"You did?" cried Jean. "Have you got an automobile? Will you take me out in it?"

"All right," replied Dodd. "Get your hat."

"There 's a riot on the east porch," said Brewster, appearing suddenly. "*Where* is that tea-table?"

"Never mind the tea," exclaimed Jean. "Here 's Mr. Dodd, and he 's got an automobile! Come out and see him."

"Where is it?" asked Brewster, joining the group.

"Why," said Dodd, "it was most unfortunate. Just as I was coming through the village it had a pain, so I left it at the blacksmith's. It will be all right by to-morrow."

"I can go to-morrow," said Jean. "We'll all go."

"How many are there of us?" asked Dodd.

"Oh, there's a lot of us," replied Jean. "There's Miss Esther —"

"Yes, here's Miss Esther," said that lady coming through the hall. "What is going on? Are you going to keep these boys here all the afternoon?"

"Why," said Jean, "I'm entertaining your company. Mr. Dodd is here."

"Oh, Putnam's Mr. Dodd?"

"Your Mr. Dodd, if you will have me," said Abraham Lincoln, rising.

"Certainly I will. Consider yourself one of my adopted boys. I have a great many. Won't you come in?"

"I've been trying to get in, but Miss Richards has kept me out."

"She is quite capable of it. You're a bad

girl, Jean. Go back to the east porch at once. Putnam wants you. Also, I left two girls weeping for the Westcott boys. Mr. Brewster, tell Putnam that Mr. Dodd is here. I 'll bring him out there directly."

"It was right down good of you to ask me over here, Miss Adams," said Dodd as they were left alone.

"I am glad to have you. Any friend of Putnam's is welcome. I am very fond of that boy."

"Yes, he 's an all-round good fellow. I 'm sorry he 's laid up, but this is certainly an ideal spot to be laid up in. The country is beautiful, and I 'm glad I brought my sketching-traps."

"Oh, yes. Putnam told me you painted. I 'm so glad."

"You won't be when you see my pictures. I don't paint very well."

"But you take an interest in art?"

"Oh, yes. I like pictures and I like people who like pictures."

It was with great satisfaction that Miss Esther showed Abraham Lincoln Dodd to

his room. When she came down stairs she paused a moment in the library. "It's nothing short of providential," she thought. "Just when I had to give up all hopes of one of those Westcott boys for Lillian, here comes along an even better candidate. He is not only available along the art lines, but Putnam says he is rich and so, of course, he could take Lillian abroad or anywhere she wants to go. I really think he'll do very well. Dodd isn't a much prettier name than Briggs, and I did want Westcott; but I must not sit too long on trifles. It is working out admirably. There does seem to be a special providence that waits on Matrimonial Bureaus. If all goes well, Lillian can sail by the middle of August after all."

XII

My chief humor is for a tyrant. — *Midsummer Night's Dream*, i, 2.

PUTNAM'S tea on the east porch proved a decided success. Abraham Lincoln Dodd was an acquisition, and Miss Esther viewed the entire group with a secret elation that at last she had secured a stage-setting such as she wanted, and furthermore had brought her actors all together upon the scene.

It seemed to her the perfected realization of her attempt to model a situation after those described in her favorite English novels. The wicker tea-table and its complete appointments, the pretty girls in their light summer frocks, the jolly, careless men with their unostentatious thoughtfulness for Putnam, the blue sky, the green, close-cut grass, and even the sweep of the graveled driveway, along which Miss Esther's imagination could see Lady Rose's daughter rolling in her victoria, — all these filled her heart with joy. This joy was not expressed

in words, but its manifestation was evident in her demeanor and made her, appropriately enough, a fitting central figure for the picture. She looked at the three girls she was so fond of, she looked at her recently acquired collection of cousins, and then she looked curiously at Mr. Dodd and wondered. "I think he will do," she thought, "and he seems to like Lillian already."

As a matter of fact, Mr. Dodd seemed to like not only Lillian but all of Miss Esther's guests, and apparently the regard was mutual. The centre of an admiring group, he was telling of some exciting experience which befell him when he was young. "It was n't so bad, then, but after I grew up —" he began.

"But you did n't grow very far," interrupted Jean.

"Not up, no; but I grew a lot crosswise. I think Nature intended me for a sphere."

"She accomplished her purpose admirably," said Putnam.

"The minister was telling me the other

TEA ON THE EAST PORCH

day," said Jean, "that I ought to find my sphere. I wonder if you 're it."

"No," said Miss Esther, involuntarily. "That is, I mean," she went on hurriedly, "I won't have anybody calling my guests spheres or any other geometrical solids. And by the way, Mr. Dodd, what am I to call you? You see, all these other adopted boys of mine I call by their first names."

"But Mr. Dodd's first name is so ponderous," said Helen.

"It is," said Dodd, hopelessly. "But," he added, brightening, "they used to call me Little Sunshine."

"I shall call you Lincoln," said Miss Esther, decidedly. "It suits you."

"I am very glad to hear that somebody has at last realized my essential Lincolnic attributes. I have always wanted to issue a proclamation. I am a born proclaimer, and if I could only emancipate somebody from something, I could die happy. I am Lincolnian to the backbone. I was cut out for a great fighter."

"If you 're talking about fighters," said Mark, "Fitzsimmons is my choice."

"Well, call me Fitz if you like. I might just as well have been named after him, if he had done his fighting as early as Lincoln did. He 's another kind of fighter, to be sure, but if a man fights to win, what 's the odds whether he fights men or conditions?"

"I don't see why men like to fight so much," said Lillian. "I should think you would rather be something nice. A painter, for instance, like Sir Joshua Reynolds."

"Oh, I am a painter, and you may call me Sir Josh if you like."

"Are you really a painter?"

"Yes, I am. I 'm a big painter. My last picture was a scene up Gloucester way, and covered the whole coast, all the shore from Rocky Neck to Cape Ann."

"All on one canvas?" asked Putnam.

"Yes, I wanted it for a certain space, but somehow I got the thing too long, and when I got it home it would n't fit."

"What did you do then?"

"I had to take a tuck in it, — up and down, you know. It did n't make any difference. It only cut out a few miles between the DeCamp cottage and the hotels on the eastern shore. That stretch is uninteresting, anyway."

"I 'm awfully glad you paint," said Lillian; "I paint some, too. If you paint better than I do, you can teach me."

"I will, with pleasure, and if you paint better than I do, you can teach me."

Miss Esther smiled. Mr. Dodd was certainly a most tractable man. If she had told him just what she wanted, he could n't have fallen in with her plans better. She foresaw a friendship that should begin over the paint tubes, and should lead straight to the deck of the European steamer. "Perhaps I am not exactly the god in the machine," she thought, while apparently listening to Mrs. Westcott's periphrases, "but I am the machinist, and I must set the god to work. And if 't were done when 't is done, then 't were well 't were done quickly."

Miss Esther regarded Lillian with the

expression a chess-player would bestow upon an idle pawn. She decided to make a move upon her matrimonial chessboard. "Lillian," she said, transparently diplomatic, "would n't you like to take Mr. Dodd over to your studio and let him advise you about that new picture of yours?"

Lillian did want to, but not feeling sure of Mr. Dodd's state of mind on the subject, she looked at him, inquiringly.

"Nothing I should like better," said he, jumping up. "As an adviser I am a great success. I make a specialty of advising. I have noticed that nowadays it is the thing to be a specialist."

"But I thought specialists were surgeons or doctors," said Edwina Butler. "Are you a doctor?"

"Yes, I am. I administer advice in capsules to my patients, and they 're not always sugar-coated, either."

"Then sometimes they are hard to take," said Lillian. "I hope you 'll sugar-coat mine."

"I don't know," Dodd returned. "I

have n't seen your picture yet, and I don't know what kind you 'll need."

"Advise her to put her cow back in the pasture," said Mark.

"Where is she now?" asked Dodd. "Do you allow your cow to paint on your pictures, Miss Hastings, while you 're away?"

"No, it was only a painted cow upon a painted picture, and I unpainted her, because —"

"Because she would n't moo," interrupted Helen.

"Oh, you are a realist?" asked Dodd.

"Yes. I want to paint cows that can moo," replied Lillian, "although I may not hear them."

"They 'd scare you to death if they did," said Jean. "I never knew anybody so afraid of cows as you are."

"Well, go on," said Miss Esther. "I 've no doubt if you meet any cows on the way Mr. Dodd will —"

"Paint them out," supplemented Putnam.

"We will," said Dodd as he walked down the steps with Lillian; "but remember that

sometimes it requires a good deal of courage to paint out."

Lillian gave him a glance of admiring appreciation. Miss Esther caught it, and smiled.

Pursuing her rôle of a zealous and very active fate, Miss Esther next proceeded to clear the stage for the more prominent actors in her comedy-drama. "Girls," she said to the Butler twins, "would n't you like to see something of the place? Why don't you ask that pair of Westcotts of yours to take you down where Kenneth was fishing the other day? That 's a most romantic spot."

"Oh, we 're not so romantic as all that," said Edwina, "or at least if we are, we have plenty of opportunities for romance; but it is n't often that we get a chance at such a lovely afternoon tea as this is, and we want to stay to it."

"This is my tea," said Putnam, "and I can manage it any way I like. Now I 'll interrupt it right here, and you kids go down to the brook. We 'll begin the tea again when you come back."

"Yes," said Miss Esther, delighted that her necessary acquiescence with Putnam's views should coincide so perfectly with her wishes, "run along at once. Stay as long as you like, and be sure to be here at seven o'clock for dinner."

"They'll never get back by that time," said Mrs. Westcott. "You don't know that quartette as well as I do. They have no idea of time. You ought not to let them go."

"Why, she's sending us," cried Edna. "I don't care a snip about going."

"Oh, go along," said her hostess, "you'll be back in time."

The four ran laughing down the steps and crossed the lawn in the direction of the woodland. Elated by her success so far, Miss Esther proceeded to dispose of Helen and Mr. Brewster, for her ultimate plan was nothing less than to leave Jean and Lieutenant Adams in undisturbed possession of the east porch. But Theodore Winthrop Brewster was not so easily managed as the Westcott boys. She made several unsuccessful attempts. "Mr. Brewster," she said,

finally, "have you seen Jack's ship since he has painted it?"

"I have, indeed," said Brewster, cheerfully; "in fact I helped him paint it yesterday."

"But he put on another coat this morning, and it really looks very different. Take Helen up to see it. She 's so interested in Jack's ship."

"I 'm the one that is interested in Jack's ship," broke in Jean; "let me go."

"Stay where you are," said Putnam, dictatorially; "you were n't invited. Miss Fairbanks was."

"But I don't want to go," said Helen. "I am very comfortable here;" and she leaned back in her lounging-chair with one of her best expressions of reposeful content.

"You always exasperate me when you look like that," said Jean. "I wish Miss Esther would make you go."

"I can't," said Miss Esther. "I can make some people do some things some of the time, but I know better than to order Helen Fairbanks around. Besides, Putnam is the

only one here who can make anybody do anything."

"Try it," said Helen, looking over at Putnam.

"Not I. I should be proud to have you give me orders, but I should never dream of commanding Miss Helen Fairbanks."

"Your decision is a wise one, as my family could tell you. Collectively and individually they have tried to make me mind, but without any very startling success."

"Come with me, Miss Fairbanks," said Brewster. "There are some interesting details about Jack's ship that I would like to show you."

Helen rose smilingly, and with an evident unconsciousness that she was obeying dictation, she walked into the house with Brewster. Putnam caught Miss Esther's glance across the porch and threw back an amused smile of comprehension.

After Helen and Mr. Brewster left them, Miss Esther diplomatically contrived an exit for herself and Mrs. Westcott. "If you will come into the library with me, Emily," she

said, "I will look up those papers and we will settle those disputed genealogical questions."

"Oh, there 's no hurry about it," said Mrs. Westcott, "I shall be here two or three days."

"Come now," said Miss Esther, "I 'm just in the mood for it."

She held the door open with such an air of compulsion that Mrs. Westcott reluctantly went in.

Left alone with Putnam on the veranda, Jean, for some unaccountable reason, felt vaguely embarrassed. "I must take these things out to Nora," she said, as she began rather aimlessly to fuss with the teacups.

"Stay where you are," said Putnam.

"But you see," said Jean, "I really must look after these things. It 's Nora's afternoon out — at least I think it is — and Miss Esther always depends on me to look after things for her — especially if she has company — and so, you see, I really must — "

"Sit down," said Putnam.

XIII

And I for no woman. — *As You Like It*, v, 2.

"I won't sit down," said Jean. "You can boss Miss Esther as much as you like, but you need n't think that I 'm going to do exactly as you say. I am in the habit of doing the ordering myself. That is the divine right of an only child."

"An only child need n't be a spoiled child," said Putnam, lazily.

"I 'm not a spoiled child," and Jean's eyes flashed; "nobody ever said that before!"

"I don't object to being a pioneer. The rôle has always appealed to me."

"Well, don't indulge your proclivities in this undiscovered country."

"Why not?"

Putnam regarded Jean deliberately, and with an expression of amused curiosity. He was an unusually handsome man, and his magnificent physique gave an impression of resolute power to a degree rare, even in a

soldier. This impression was in no way lessened, but was rather accented by his present condition of physical helplessness. Stretched at full length in a steamer-chair, and consequently incapable of active exertion, he still showed unmistakable evidence of an immense amount of reserve force. It was this air of indolently conscious superiority which proved so excessively tantalizing to Jean.

She sat down in a low chair beside him, and resting her chin in her hands, gazed straight into his eyes.

"Why not?" repeated Putnam.

"Because I won't stand it. You 're the spoiled child yourself. You always have your own way, irrespective of what anybody else wants, and it makes me furious to have you think that you can order me about as you do others. You shan't do it!"

"Why not?" said Putnam again.

He still looked at her quizzically with the added provocation of a slight patronizing smile. Jean flushed angrily. Putnam changed his position, but with difficulty, and the expression of pain which came into his

eyes roused all Jean's instincts of helpfulness. Without realizing what she was doing, she rose and took a pillow from the hammock. This she placed under Putnam's shoulder, and with quick, deft touches patted it into exactly the right position.

"Thank you," he said, with a grave courtesy quite at variance with his former teasing mood. Jean flushed again, but this time it was not with anger. She could not have analyzed the reason even if she had tried. It was simply the charm of Putnam Adams's personality. Splendid physical strength and an iron will, with a calm, consummate indifference, born of unqualified self-confidence, make the most attractive combination possible in a man, and he possessed these qualities in their perfection. Possibly the consciousness of this had added to his manner a little too great a touch of autocracy, but this was always forgiven him, because, when necessary, Putnam Adams commanded forgiveness with the same assurance that he commanded everything else.

And so this personality appealed to Jean,

not only because of its effectiveness with all women, but because this was the first time that a man of this stamp had come within her experience. She was a little bewildered by it, and in consequence lost much of her self-confident ability to hold her own against any odds.

Indeed, it was otherwise inexplicable that she, the high-handed dispenser of begged-for favors, should, not only without invitation, but without volition, have bestowed upon an outrageously indifferent beneficiary a favor which, however casual it might seem, was really a tribute to his masterfulness. She was conquered, although she didn't know it.

Putnam Adams knew it, but he did not tell her.

After a few weeks of rest and Miss Esther's care, Putnam's condition improved to such an extent that he was able to get about without his crutches, and was able to take his place in the sextette which had many excursions by automobile and otherwise in the surrounding country about Whitfield.

The Westcott party had gone on to the Adirondacks, after promising to stop at Miss Esther's on the way back. After Mark's departure, Chub had transferred her affections to Abraham Lincoln Dodd, whom she called Linkum, and whom she alternately petted and tyrannized over.

One morning Dodd lay on his back on the lawn, looking up at a very blue sky, and Chub amused herself by piling leaves upon his face.

"I 'm a wobin," she said, gleefully, "and you 're my Babeth in the Woodth."

"I knew a robin once, —" began Dodd.

"A nither wobin than me?"

"No, not nicer than you, except that that robin did n't put sand in my eyes."

"Wath it a weally wobin?"

"Yes, a really robin, with feathers. We were great friends."

"I have a friend — he 'th a chipmuk; and I have 'nother friend, and he 'th a tagger; and I have 'nother friend, and he 'th a — a — a — Bear — a awful big Bear; and I had 'nother friend, and he wath a little kittypillar — but he ranned away."

"Is your bear a really bear?" asked Dodd.

"Oh, yeth; a big live bear with featherth, and he livth wight over there."

With a comprehensive sweep of her dimpled arm, Chub vaguely indicated the habitat of the bear.

"Lovely!" said Dodd. "And do the tiger and chipmunk live there, too?"

"Yeth, we all live there, and we have thupper together and the tagger eath bread and milk, and the chipmuk eath cuthtard, and the bear —"

"Eats the caterpillar?" questioned Dodd.

"No, he did n't. The little kittypillar ranned away, cauth the bear theen him go, and he ranned acroth the woad and acroth the brook and acroth the fenth, he ranned awful fatht."

"Did you run after him?"

"Yeth, and I felled in the brook and got all drownded up, and the chipmuk come 'long and he felled in the brook, and the tagger come 'long and he felled in the brook, and the bear come 'long and he felled in the

brook, and the chipmuk come 'long and he felled in the brook, and—"

"Oh, you had the chipmunk in the brook before."

"Yeth, but he felled in two timeth; and the bear come 'long—"

But the end of this thrilling tale was lost to history, and so far as we know authoritatively, the animals are still in the brook, for just at this moment Chub's nurse appeared and carried the baby off for her morning nap.

Dodd rose, brushed off the leaves and wisps of grass with which Chub had favored him, and went into the house in search of Miss Esther. When he reached the hall he saw her in the library.

As he entered the room, she said, apparently to nobody, "They are all doing beautifully, except Winthrop Brewster. I cannot understand, Cassius," she said, "what is the matter with that man. I'm sure he cares a lot about Helen, and last night I managed to leave them alone on the East porch, and," seeing Dodd in the doorway, "if you 'll believe me, Lincoln Dodd, nothing came of it!"

"You don't mean it!" said Dodd.

"Yes, I do, and I was just telling Cassius —"

"I heard you address Cassius. Is he a dog?"

"No, I mean Caius Cassius. I often talk to my books — especially when I want advice."

"Do you often get it?"

"Always, if I ask the right ones."

"How do you know who are the right ones?"

"My intuitions tell me, and just now they tell me that you are the one."

"I 'm a good adviser," said Dodd.

"Yes, I believe you are, and that is why I 'm going to ask you seriously about a very important matter."

"Do," he replied. "I 've been wanting excitement of some kind."

"Well, this will be exciting enough, I promise you. It 's nothing more nor less than that you are to get married, — sooner than you expect to."

"To you? All right!"

"No. Don't be foolish. Not to me. But really, a rich young man like you are, and a good man, and a kind man, ought to make some girl happy."

"But perhaps it would n't make me happy," said Dodd.

"Oh, don't attempt to be coy with me. I understand perfectly how the land lies, and I am thoroughly pleased, I can assure you. Lillian Hastings is one of the dearest girls I know, and —"

"Good Heavens! Miss Esther, what in the world are you talking about?"

"Oh, anybody can see with half an eye that you 're in love with her."

"But I 'm not. I 'm not a bit in love with Miss Hastings or with any other lady, and I never wish to marry or be given in marriage."

"You 're not in love with Lillian Hastings!"

Miss Esther dropped onto the sofa. She looked the picture of woe.

"Et tu, Brute!" she said. "Another candidate defeated!"

XIV

Here 's a small trifle of wives. — *Merchant of Venice*, ii, 2.

LILLIAN'S studio was peculiarly fitted for confidences. It was away up in the top of a house which had been constructed in the time when gingerbread formed a part of the architectural impulse of Central New York. Still, up in the attic there had been left an unfinished room — garret, with rafters and other things dear to the heart of those who were born in Central New York in the middle seventies. This room the young woman had adapted to her own uses. She had impressed the men from the Whitfield Planing Mill and Agricultural Works, and she had directed them to construct a ceiling of matched lumber — though she did not know what matched lumber meant.

After it was finished she discovered that it was simply a ceiling of boards closely fitted together, and that by no possibility could the boards be said to match — so far

as her eye for color could discover. Still, she was satisfied, for she had covered the whole affair with a coat of burlap, and over this she had put a coat of paint — dark green, with splashes of gold in it — and when it was done she sat down and thought it all out.

"They thought it was matched lumber," she said. "I have made it match."

That, in effect, was the attitude which Lillian Hastings, she of the artistic temperament, held toward life.

This point of view had been questioned by Jean, but Helen understood it. "It's this way," said she, as they discussed it for the thousandth time. "Very often Lillian's lumber does n't match, but she covers it up with a bit of decorative drapery and is perfectly satisfied."

"Yes," said Lillian, "but the decoration, if it is of my own choosing, pleases me so much that I forget the unmatchedness of the lumber."

"Just in the same way, I suppose," said Jean, "that you have forgotten the ugliness of that picture which you have so cleverly

covered with that square of Turkish embroidery."

"Exactly that. As it is, I forget that the ugliness is behind, and see only the beautiful. To me the ugliness is not there."

"No," said Helen, "I know it. Now to me the ugliness is not only there, but is all the more visible to me from the fact that I try to cover it up."

"That's foolishness," said Jean. "There's no sense in seeing ugly things because they're covered up; but then, there's no sense in having them there, anyway. If a thing is ugly, why not take it away, or else go somewhere else yourself?"

Lillian went about the work of the studio thoughtfully. "There are some uglinesses," she said, presently, "that one cannot get away from. If they are there, and are put there by those who put things there for us in the beginning — then why not either accept them or get away from them, or — cover them up? The system is complicated. Not all can be escaped. Not all can be accepted — but all of them can be covered up

to a greater or less degree, and the mere fact that we are conscious of them ourselves need not make them visible to those who happen to come under the influence of the beautiful things with which we cover the uglinesses — Bah! the very idea of exploiting all our guilty consciences and all our ugly little ideas before everybody that may come along! It is disgusting. We know they are there. We know the spots on the wall-paper, and we know that there is a worn place in the carpet, and these mean either carelessness or something else. Whatever they mean, we back a chair up against the spot on the wall and we put a rug over the carpet's shortcomings — just exactly as we put figurative chairs and rugs over the spots on our consciences. We know they are there — but the other people do not, maybe, and if they don't, then they are not offended by the sight. They haven't got to fight the thing out. If we have — then we can do it after they have gone away. We will have to do it alone, anyway."

"I am more glad than ever that I haven't

the artistic temperament," said Jean, "if you have to reason things out as deeply as that. I don't see the use of paying any attention to ugly things. It's all I can do to find time enough for all the beautiful things there are in the world."

"Much you know about the world!" flung in Lillian.

"Mr. Brewster says," remarked Helen, "that nothing is ugly, *per se*."

"I always did wonder what *per se* meant," said Jean; "but it seems to me, Helen, that Mr. Brewster's opinions mean an awful lot to you of late."

"That's because his opinions are valuable *per se*."

"Now you see, Jean," said Lillian, "what *per se* means. It means to Helen."

"Well, if he expresses his opinions to me more than he does to you girls, it's because I listen with some serious attention, and you — well, you never seem to be around when he's talking."

"There's gratitude for you!" exclaimed Jean. "After we have purposely kept out

of your way and tried our best to give you opportunities for hearing opinions —"

"And for serious attentions," broke in Lillian.

"You need n't have troubled yourselves," said Helen, "for your kind efforts were not even noticed, let alone appreciated."

"Speak for yourself," said Jean; "speak for Mr. Brewster too, if you like; but I can tell you that Miss Esther understood and appreciated our delicate little unattentions."

Helen looked at Jean — blankly at first, and then with a slow-dawning realization of her meaning. "Am I to understand," she said, "that you think Miss Esther thinks that I am trying to attract Mr. Brewster's attentions?"

"Not so much that," remarked Lillian, "but that Miss Esther is trying to attract them for you."

"Indeed," said Helen; "do you imagine for a minute that I —"

"Oh, Helen," interrupted Jean, "take off that haughty Princess air. Have you ever seen anywhere one who fitted the rôle of

Prince for your castle better than this same man whose opinions you have been quoting?"

"Oh, if you are going to be serious about the matter," said Helen, "I am quite willing to admit that Mr. Brewster comes nearer to my ideal than any other man I have ever met."

"He ought to appreciate that compliment," said Lillian; "that is, if he knows what your ideals are."

"He does know," said Helen, slowly. "I have told him."

"Was n't he scared, then?" asked Jean.

"Of course he was," replied Helen. "He was so scared that he ran away and I have n't seen him since."

"You can see him right away, if you like," cried Jean, who was sitting on the broad window-seat. "Mr. Brewster!" she called loudly.

The automobile stopped. Brewster got out and came toward the house, smiling up at Jean.

The machine, with Miss Esther and Lin-

coln Dodd as the only occupants, went puffing on along the country road.

"I am glad of this opportunity to talk to you alone, Lincoln," began Miss Esther.

"Well, you said you wanted to talk to me about something; that 's why I brought you out this afternoon. I thought we 'd manage to drop Brewster somewhere."

"Do you know, I was perfectly astounded when you told me the other day that you were not in love with Lillian Hastings!"

"I told you only the truth. I was not, I am not, and I am positive that I shall not be. But I have no reason to think that if I were, it would particularly please Miss Hastings."

"That does not make any difference," said Miss Esther, impatiently. "It would please me."

"You know, Miss Esther," said Lincoln, "I would do anything in the world to please you, and if you are sure that Miss Hastings —"

"Oh, will you, really? I do want you to fall in love with Lillian, and I want you

to be married by the middle of August and then take her abroad to study art."

"Well, that is certainly a delightful programme you have mapped out for us."

"I 'm so glad you think so. I knew that when you came to understand them fully, you would agree to my plans."

"Have you many plans of this sort?"

"Three," said Miss Esther, very seriously. "But the other two are all right. It was only you that I was worried about. I am very much obliged to you."

"Look here, Miss Esther, what in the world are you talking about? You surely are not in earnest?"

"I believe I 'll tell you all about it."

"If I'm to be married in August, I think it 's about time that I knew something definite."

With an enthusiasm born of her deep interest in the cause, supplemented by her success with Lincoln Dodd, Miss Esther detailed to him the plans of her Matrimonial Bureau. She told him of the inception of the plan, and how happy Tekla was in her

Nebraska home. She told him, too, of the dearth of suitable material for her protégées in Whitfield, and she told it all with a quaintness of argument that carried conviction. She enumerated instances which proved conclusively that Lieutenant Adams was interested in Jean ; she confessed that the affair between Helen and Brewster was not progressing quite as rapidly as she desired, but looked forward with a cheerful confidence to what she hoped was inevitable. "And now," she said, "that I feel assured of your regard for Lillian, I cannot help flattering myself that perhaps my seemingly unusual methods have not been employed altogether in vain."

"But, my dear Miss Esther," cried Dodd, "now that I grasp your meaning as one having inside information, let me hasten to tell you that although I must refuse to be a candidate, even for the hand of any one of your charming protégées, I shall be more than glad to remain upon the executive committee, and I promise to help you in every way that I possibly can."

Miss Esther was of a buoyant nature; she was persevering, even persistent, and it took a pretty hard blow to daunt her, and now the blow had fallen. A week before Lincoln Dodd had discouraged her. He had refused to fall in with her plans. But to-day she had thought he was more tractable, even to the point of acquiescence; and to have her hopes ruthlessly crushed to earth, even though sure they would rise again, made her feel for the moment absolutely discouraged. "I don't see," she said, "how you can help me in any other way."

"Oh, there are lots of other ways, my dear Miss Esther. For one thing, I might provide a substitute. I know a man who I am sure would admire your Lillian Hastings. He is a most kind and estimable gentleman, admirably fitted for the rôle of loving fairy godfather. He is intensely interested in art and would enjoy nothing better than a honeymoon trip to Europe on the fifteenth of August. Is that a sailing-day? I never can be sure of what day a steamer sails."

"That does n't matter," said Miss Esther; "who is the man?"

"He is my father," said Dodd.

XV

Pray thee, let it serve for table talk. — *Merchant of Venice*, iii, 5.

It was certainly surprising that when Dodd's father accepted Miss Esther's invitation and came to the Adams house, the gayety of that particular nation was increased rather than diminished. The young people most interested had felt that the advent of an elderly gentleman might prove an obstacle to the careless fun and frolic which they had enjoyed all summer. Instead of which, Mr. George Washington Dodd, father of Abraham Lincoln Dodd, proved himself not only ready to follow the leader, but to lead the followers. He not only fell in with their plans, but he proposed plans of his own and insisted upon their being carried out.

The plans were usually impracticable, but he insisted just the same, and the attempts at them were just as much fun as if they had been successful. He had not been in the

house twenty-four hours before he had turned the East porch inside out. "I think the hammocks would be more comfortable out under the trees," he said, and out the hammocks went.

Michael was instructed how to trim the box-hedges, and the cook was inducted into the mysteries of a salad dressing which had chives — and not too many. He persuaded all the clocks in the house to strike together, and painted the chicken-coops red because he liked them better so.

He reconstructed Jack's battle-ship upon more approved models and showed him the distinctive difference between a brig and a brigantine. As for Chub, he proved himself to be an adept in the quelling of the ebullient fits of temper which manifested themselves so often. Her most theatrical pose was to sit down and yell with much enthusiasm, as she did when she first discovered the young men on the East porch. When George Washington Dodd saw this exhibition for the first time, he approached Chub casually, put his hand over her mouth,

and said "Stop that!" whereupon Chub immediately stopped. Though often repeated, this process continued efficacious.

In a word Mr. Dodd became a power in the house. Not just such a power as was Lieutenant Adams. Putnam's masterfulness was actuated by motives which would be considered rules under the Army Regulations, and, so far as he was concerned, they made law. They were reasonable and — well, when he wanted a thing done, he wanted it done instantly. They have that habit of demanding obedience in the Army. Dodd, on the contrary, had the wayward whims of a spoiled child, but carried them out with an unflinching determination before which even Putnam Adams went down.

Miss Esther pondered deeply over this difference in the characters of the two men. She realized that she implicitly obeyed Putnam, and she enjoyed doing so. She assisted in the carrying out of Mr. Dodd's plans, as they all did, compelled by the sheer force of his whimsical, inconsequent personality.

"He 's like a child," she thought, "a great,

big, overgrown boy; and he's just made to be humored. If Lillian can only learn to humor him, she can have her own way as much as she likes."

It was at this point in her meditations that Miss Esther was interrupted by Lincoln Dodd.

"Did n't I tell you Father would admire your Lillian Hastings?" he said, dropping astride of the first chair he came to.

"Does he?" said Miss Esther, eagerly.

"Does he! I should say so. Just look at them now!"

Miss Esther looked and saw Dodd Senior and Lillian Hastings sitting on the lawn deeply interested in a game of mumble-peg. Although Lillian's discarded parasol lay only a few feet away, the players sat in the broiling sun, apparently oblivious of the heat.

"Coming on all right, is n't it?" said Lincoln.

"Yes. I hope so — I think so; but he has n't said anything definite."

"How do you know he has n't?" asked Lincoln.

"Oh, I'm sure Lillian would have told me if he had."

"Perhaps he has n't had a chance."

"Oh, if that's the case, let's make a chance for them."

Lincoln entered into the spirit of the game with enthusiasm. "Let's ask Lillian to stay to tea," he exclaimed.

"She 'll stay anyway," replied Miss Esther; "and besides, that won't give them a chance alone."

"Well, ask her to stay to dinner, and Dad can take her home."

"That will do," said Miss Esther; "and it's a lovely moonlight night."

So the conspiracy succeeded, and Lillian stayed to dinner.

"Am I the only guest?" asked Lillian, when dinner was announced.

"Yes," said Miss Esther; "that does n't embarrass you, does it?"

"I was afraid it might," said Putnam, "so I've sent for Jean. Stay the proceedings, Cousin Esther; she'll be here in a minute."

IN THE BROILING SUN, OBLIVIOUS OF THE HEAT

Jean came flying in, becomingly flushed after her run across the field. "I came across lots," she exclaimed, "because I was in such a hurry to get here. Thank you, so much, Miss Esther, for sending Jack for me."

"Why, I didn't send him," said Miss Esther.

"But he said that you said that I must come because you were going to have strawberry shortcake for dinner."

"How ridiculous," said Miss Esther. "I never sent any message at all by Jack, and besides, there aren't any strawberries now. It's too late."

"I never thought of that," said Jean, looking a little blank. "I was so glad to come," she explained, ingenuously.

"I sent the message myself," said Putnam, calmly. "I knew you wouldn't come unless I sent an invitation from Cousin Esther. And of course, I didn't mean real strawberry shortcake."

"Perhaps you didn't mean for me really to come," said Jean.

"I meant I really wanted you to come."

"If I had known that you sent the invitation I would n't have come."

"Not if you knew that I really wanted you?"

At this, Lincoln, who was behind the speakers, nudged Miss Esther's arm, and rolled up his eyes ecstatically. Miss Esther looked like a beneficent Machiavelli, and folded her hands with an air of intense complacency.

"Of course," said Jean, "you always succeed in getting what you want; — that 's your way. But in this case — "

"In this case," said Putnam, provokingly, "I succeeded in getting you."

"Indeed you have n't succeeded in getting me!"

"Well, if I have n't, I will," said Putnam, as he rose to go to dinner.

This speech so pleased the conspirators, that Lincoln Dodd seized Miss Esther's hands, and the two fairly danced down the long hall toward the dining-room.

"Hang out our banners on the outward walls," sang Miss Esther.

"What for?" asked Lillian, who, accompanied by Mr. Dodd, had joined the procession.

"So people can see them, of course," said Lincoln. "It's foolish to hide your banners under a bushel."

With what Miss Esther deemed a masterpiece of generalship, she arranged that Lillian should sit next to Mr. Dodd. Lillian, willfully misunderstanding instructions, took the chair on the side of the table where Lincoln stood.

"Oh, she does n't mean me," he exclaimed in dismay. "She means the Ancient."

"What are you?" asked Putnam; "the Honorable?"

"I think," said Lillian, "that the young Mr. Dodd looks older than the old Mr. Dodd."

"It's quite as bad," said Putnam, "to say 'the old Mr. Dodd,' as to say 'the Ancient.'"

"But I have to distinguish them in some way, and I don't see that either one looks older than the other."

"You might call me George," suggested Mr. Dodd, casually.

"I 'm afraid if I did, you would call me Lillian."

"Very likely," said Mr. Dodd.

"Let 's order some more banners," whispered Lincoln to Miss Esther. "I think we 'll need them."

"What are you talking about?" said Jean. "What are these banners?"

"A banner," said the Ancient, instructively, "is one who or that which bans."

"What does ban mean?" asked Lillian.

"A ban," said the Ancient, still instructively, "is a thing you put things under."

"I thought it meant to get married," said Jean.

"That 's when it 's plural," explained the Ancient, kindly. "It takes two banns to get married."

"May I interrupt your very wise discourse," said Putnam, "long enough to request you to pass me the salt?"

"Now that 's always the way," said the Ancient in an exasperated tone; "the con-

ventional dinner-table appointments are sadly at fault. One never gets fairly started on a logical sequence of ideas, but one is interrupted by a request to pass the salt. I use the term advisedly. The passing of the salt is but a type of the things which we are made to do at the time when we do not want to do them. There should be a remedy for all this. Invention, as it stands to-day, is deplorably neglectful of our minor needs. Invention, after all, is but the application of some well-known force or principle to a new use."

Here the Ancient produced from his pocket a small mechanical toy. It was a tiny automobile, made of tin and painted red, and when wound up would run by itself for several minutes. Turning it upside down, he proceeded to wind it; then reversing it, and holding the wheels tightly, he emptied into it the contents of Miss Esther's salt-cellar. Starting it in the direction of Putnam, he released the wheels and the machine moved slowly along the table.

"You see," he observed, "how easy it is

to apply mechanical power in a way which will do the most good. If every dinner-table were supplied with this simple contrivance, it would do away with the passing of the salt. Consequently, there would be no interruption in one's flow of conversation."

"With *one's* flow of conversation!" said Jean. "And pray, when would the other five get a chance to speak?"

"They would n't," said the Ancient.

"I don't see why any one wants to interrupt," said Lillian, "when the conversation is so instructive and entertaining as Mr. Dodd's is."

"Banners!" said Lincoln, aside to Miss Esther.

But later in the evening there was reason to bring in the banners from the outward walls, or at least it seemed so. Miss Esther's deep-laid scheme for sending the elder Mr. Dodd home with Lillian seemed in imminent peril. When Lillian announced that it was time for her to go, Putnam suggested that as he was about to go home with Jean, Lincoln and Lillian could go with them, and they

would all walk around by the brook. Miss Esther was not present at the moment, and though three people strongly objected to the arrangement, as Putnam's suggestions were looked upon as commands, none of them dared question it.

Lincoln Dodd did not wish to appear ungallant; Washington Dodd was not quite sure that his escort was desired, and Lillian naturally hesitated to express her preference.

Lincoln Dodd rushed into the house, ostensibly to fetch his hat, but really to find Miss Esther. He almost ran over that lady in the hall, and whispered tragically, "Haul in the banners! Awful things are happening! Putnam says I've got to go home with Lillian."

"Putnam, indeed!" cried Miss Esther. "I'll fix Putnam."

She hurried out on the veranda.

"Lincoln can't go home with you, Lillian," she said. "I want him myself this evening. He promised to — transplant some bulbs for me."

"They're night-blooming cereus," said

Lincoln, "and they always have to be moved at night."

"Yes," said Miss Esther; "and so, Mr. George Dodd, will you please escort Miss Hastings home?"

"Certainly, if Miss Hastings does n't object to the transfer," said Mr. Dodd; but he spoke without enthusiasm.

"Oh, all Dodds look alike to me," said Lillian, flippantly.

Miss Esther looked the picture of despair, as, after this speech, Lillian and her apparently unwilling escort walked silently down the path.

"Honestly," said Miss Esther, "from the depths of your heart, tell me truly what you think; tell me by the light of your greater experience, and by the knowledge you have of your father's affections; tell me," she continued, tragically, "*will* those two hearts find each other?"

She hung on his words with the air of a doomed prisoner awaiting sentence.

"I don't know," said Dodd.

XVI

Conspirant 'gainst this 'high-illustrious prince. — *King Lear*, v, 3.

"I SUPPOSE," said George Washington Dodd, indulgently, as they went out the gate, "that you, being possessed of youth, beauty, and a romantic temperament, would prefer to go home around by the brook."

"Yes," said Lillian, "I would, and I am going that way. But if you, not being possessed of those very desirable qualities, prefer to go the other way, you may."

"No, we 'll both go around by the brook," said Dodd, airily; "for those qualities are as much mine as yours. Beauty is entirely a matter of opinion, and my own opinion is that I am very beautiful. Youth is a matter of comparison, and by some standards I am exceedingly young; and as to my romantic temperament — give me a chance."

"Your beauty of its kind, I will admit, though perhaps it is not equal to my own," said Lillian, consideringly; "your romantic

temperament is an unknown quantity — it may be like mine; but surely I am not quite as old as you are."

"I 'm not sure about that," Dodd replied. "Of course, you are young, but then so am I. The gods love me, and I shall never grow old."

"But," objected Lillian, "those whom the gods love die young."

"That is, I admit, the accepted intent of the quotation, but its real meaning is that those whom the gods love are young when they die, for the simple reason that they never grow old. That makes me just the same age as you, and I shall always stay so."

"All right," said Lillian; "then we 'll go around by the brook."

"And now," said Dodd, as they walked along the path to the brook, "since you have conceded my youth and beauty, I will proceed to convince you of my romantic temperament. Just now it is wildly enthusiastic over the beauty of the night. To me, the moon is a beautiful golden boat, sailing away over blue waters. And that reminds

me, I shall sail myself next month. I am going abroad."

"To study art?"

"No, not that, although I mean to buy a few pictures that I've had my eye on for some years. By the way, I want you to go with me."

"To advise you about the pictures?" said Lillian, delightedly.

"No, as my wife."

"What!" exclaimed Lillian.

"You heard me," said Dodd. "It may seem precipitate, but I am a man of quick decisions. I always decide quickly when I find what I want — whether it's a picture or you."

"Are you sure you want me?" asked Lillian.

"Yes, I'm sure. I was sure the moment I saw you. I want you, and I want you now. I want you to marry me and go abroad with me next month."

"And then may I study art?"

"You may not. There's to be no more of this art foolishness. We will look at pic-

tures together, and we will buy pictures together, but you have painted your last picture. Will you go with me?"

"Well, for a girl with a confessedly romantic temperament, this is about the most unromantic proposal I ever heard of; and from a man, too, who boasted of his own romantic temperament."

"Never you mind that. Once you have answered my question in the way I want you to, my romantic temperament is at your disposal for the rest of your life; but just now I am in earnest."

"You seem to be in earnest," said Lillian, "but if ever I want an exhibition of your romantic temperament, it is at a time like this. Unless you can — "

"Oh, I can ask you in more romantic terms, if that 's what you want."

Dodd dropped on one knee, struck his breast melodramatically, and began —

"Queen Regent of my heart, may I supplicate — "

"Oh, not that way," interrupted Lillian. "That 's foolish. I don't believe your ro-

mantic temperament is the real thing at all."

"Yes, it is — truly, it is. I 'll try again."

He put his arm around Lillian, and began with an impassioned, "My darling — "

"Oh, that won't do at all — that 's too familiar."

"Is it?" said Dodd, composedly, but he did not release her. "Well, then, I 'll tell you what. I 'll just say in plain English, 'Will you be my wife?' and you just say, 'Yes,' and then to-morrow I 'll make a study of this and write it out in a sort of an essay. We 'll write it together. Now then, will you marry me?"

Lillian was helpfully silent.

"Say Yes," he prompted.

Lillian said yes.

The next day George Washington Dodd wandered around the house in a sort of beatific daze quite contrary to his usual alert activity.

He and Lillian had planned to announce their engagement that afternoon at tea, and

they anticipated a truly exciting occasion. After luncheon Mr. Dodd strolled into the darkened library and lay down upon a couch in a remote corner, where he promptly fell asleep. A little later he was wakened by voices in the room.

"I wish I knew," said Miss Esther, "exactly how the situation stands. Do you think there 's any hope?"

"I don't know," said Lincoln. "Dad thinks an awful lot of her, but don't believe she cares for him much; and it 's awfully soon, anyway. Give them time."

"Oh, I think Lillian is very fond of your father," said Miss Esther; "but somehow he does n't seem to have a very high opinion of her art work."

"He has n't," said Lincoln, honestly. "But he has a high opinion of her."

"Well, that will do just as well, if only he will come to the point soon. I wish you 'd ask him what he means to do, for if Lillian sails by the fifteenth of August something must be done soon."

"Me ask him!" exclaimed Dodd; "he 'd

tell me to go about my business. No, you ask him, or at least with your clever tact find out from him. I 'd rather ask Lillian."

"Well, then, you do that," said Miss Esther; "and find out what you can and we 'll compare notes. You meet me here in the library to-night and tell me what you 've learned, and in the mean time I 'll find out what I can from your father. And another thing that 's bothering me is this, I 'm afraid Helen is not going to accept Mr. Brewster."

"Has he asked her?" said Lincoln.

"No," replied Miss Esther; "but it 's because she won't give him a chance. She is so proud and reserved, and she snubs him far more than she realizes. I don't wonder that he does n't like it."

"Can't you reason with her?"

"No; the more you reason with Helen Fairbanks, the worse she is. The only girl who is acting just right is Jean, and Putnam is a dear. That affair is going on just as I want it to."

George Washington Dodd, on the sofa,

suddenly realized that he was deliberately listening to the deep-laid plans of a desperate conspiracy, but as he had not made his presence known in the first place, he certainly could not do so now, and it was with a decided feeling of relief that he saw the conspirators leave the room, quite unaware of his eavesdropping presence.

"Huh!" he exclaimed; "so they're going to hold a court of inquiry over Lillian and me, are they? Well, we'll be ready for them. After I've made up my mind what to say, and after I've told Lillian what she's to say, they may begin as soon as they like. I'll go over and see her now, and I rather think we'll defer that announcement this afternoon. We'll have a lot of fun out of this thing."

As he left the house, Lincoln was just coming from the stables in his automobile. "Take me in," said his father. "Where are you going?"

"Over to the Hastings house," said Lincoln. "Where do you want to go?"

"That's where I want to go. I wish

you 'd leave me there and then do an errand for me down in the village."

"But I was going to take Miss Hastings for a ride."

"All right. You can come back and get her after you do this errand for me. I want to send a wire to New York. Here it is. I have written it down."

Lincoln tucked the paper in his pocket. "All right," he said; "I 'll be back in half an hour."

While the telegraph operator waited, Lincoln read the message his father had given him. It ran:

"No message for New York. Just want to be rid of you for a few minutes."

"There 's some mistake here," said Lincoln to the operator. "I have brought the wrong paper. I 'll see you again later."

"Phew!" he said. "Dad 's coming it rather strong. To think of his sending me on a kid's errand like that! But I 'll be even with him yet!"

When he reached the Hastings house he found his father and his hoped-for step-

mother apparently wrapped in the deepest gloom. They sat far apart on the veranda and appeared to be dejected beyond power of words. As he drew up, his father said, "I believe you were to take Miss Hastings for a drive. She is quite ready to go. I will walk on home."

"Just as well take you over, Dad!"

"No, thank you. I prefer to walk."

After a very slight exchange of courtesies with Lillian, which Lincoln had no idea was part of a carefully prearranged plan, George Washington Dodd walked away, inwardly chuckling, but displaying great gravity of demeanor.

"That telegram scheme was an inspiration," he said to himself. "Now if Lillian only does exactly as I told her to, and I think she will, that young hopeful of mine will have a ripping report to take home to his fellow conspirator. As for the fellow conspirator herself, I will see to it that she has a report equally hair-raising."

XVII

A quarrel, but nothing wherefore. — *King Lear*, ii, 3.

DELIGHTED with the little comedy he had devised, Mr. Dodd walked on toward home. At the gate he was joined by Jean.

"Why are you looking so particularly pleased?" she asked.

"I was thinking about a friend of mine who is very, very happy."

"What made him so?" demanded Jean.

"He has just become engaged to a very beautiful young lady."

"Oh," she replied; "I thought you were looking happy on your own account."

"No, no, indeed; far from it. On my own account I am deeply, desperately dismal."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know. What would you do?"

"When I feel like that I always go to Miss Esther and she talks to me."

"Good. I will go straight to Miss Esther,

and somehow I have a feeling that she will talk to me."

"Do," said Jean.

By this time the two had reached the East porch, where, as usual, Putnam was reading in the hammock.

"How do you do," said Jean. "Where 's Miss Esther?"

"I think she 's in the library," said Putnam. "Shall I call her?"

"No," replied Jean; "Mr. Dodd wants to see her; don't you, Mr. Dodd?"

"Oh, I do want to see her. I want to see her dreadfully."

"What 's the matter with Dodd?" asked Putnam, as that gentleman went into the house.

"I don't know," said Jean; "but he 's got the blues something fearful. I 'm so sorry for him."

"Be sorry for me, won't you?" said Putnam; "I 've got the blues, too."

"Why do you have the blues?"

"So you 'll be sorry for me."

"But I 'm always sorry for you."

"Why?"

"Because you have such a dreadful disposition."

"Yes, I have, have n't I?" said Putnam, placidly.

"Yes, you have; and the worst of it is you don't care a bit."

"Do *you* care?"

"No, indeed — why should I?"

Jean tossed her head, and Putnam observed, coolly, "If you bob your head about like that, you 'll lose that very beautiful pink rose out of your hair, which you have arranged with such accuracy and precision."

"I don't care if I do!"

"If you don't care for the rose, then give it to me."

"Indeed I won't. I would n't give you a rose for anything."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because it 's so silly and sentimental."

"Oh, I did n't mean it in a sentimental way. I never thought of that. I just saw a beautiful rose, and wanted you to give it to me."

"Oh, well, if you want it that way, then take it!" Jean snatched the rose from her hair, and threw it on the table between them.

"Give it to me," said Putnam, dictatorially.

"I've given it to you just as much as I intend to. If you want it, take it."

"I do want it, but I won't take it, and you *shall* give it to me."

"I won't do any such thing! You are altogether too domineering. It was all very well when you were an invalid, and ought to be read to, and coddled, and fussed over, but you need n't think you can keep on ruling everybody who comes anywhere near you."

"I don't mean to rule you —"

"You 'd better not," she interrupted.

"But I 'm going to ask you once more to give me the rose."

"I have given it to you," said Jean, stubbornly. "If you don't take it, it 's because you don't want it."

"I only want it if you 'll give it to me,"

said Putnam, more gently than he had spoken before.

"Nothing of the sort! You only want to have your own way. You're a horrid, dictatorial, arrogant, overbearing, conceited man! and I *hate* you!"

Jean ran down the steps and across the lawn toward her own home.

Putnam got up lazily from the hammock, and taking the rose from the table, smiled as he put it carefully away in his pocket-book.

"I did tease her," he said, "but 't was worth it!" And he smiled again.

Having held the session of the court of inquiry in the library, Miss Esther, after leaving Mr. Dodd, was in no mood to receive the shock which awaited her on the East porch.

"Where's Jean?" she asked, when she saw Putnam alone.

"She got mad at me," said Putnam, "and ran away home."

"One of her usual playful jests, I suppose."

"No," said Putnam, "this time she seemed very much in earnest."

"Oh, she does n't mean anything, Putnam. Don't take her too seriously."

"I 'm not sure that I shall take her at all," said Putnam. "She 's a little spitfire."

Miss Esther, clasping her hands in despair, was about to speak, when Nora announced that Mr. Brewster was on the front veranda.

Brewster's dejected air was quite in harmony with Miss Esther's mood, but she was unprepared for the news he brought her.

"I am going away," he said, "and I have come to say good-bye."

By a whimsical association of ideas, Miss Esther suddenly realized exactly how Chub felt when she indulged in her favorite trick of sitting flat down on the ground and squealing. The elder lady did not squeal, but had circumstances permitted it, she would have been glad to do so. All in the same day her three clients had disappointed her hopes. She wrung her hands, tragically. "One woe doth tread upon another's heels, so fast they follow!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I, too, am sorry to go," said Brewster. "I have had a very happy summer,

and you have been very kind to me, Miss Esther."

"But you are leaving us very suddenly."

"I know it; but there are reasons — good reasons."

"But Helen — Miss Fairbanks — does she know you're going?"

"Oh, yes, she knows. I have just come from there."

"And does n't she care?"

"No, I think not," said Brewster, with his calm dignity.

"Oh, Mr. Brewster," cried Miss Esther, "I wish she did care."

"I wish so, too," he replied.

"But have you made allowances for Helen's excessive pride?"

"She has n't made allowances for mine," said Brewster.

"Hullo, you people," cried Lincoln Dodd, as he rushed up the driveway in his automobile; "is tea ready? I'm nearly starving."

"Not quite," said Miss Esther; "but it soon will be. Come on in."

For the first time that summer, none of the girls came over to tea. Obliged to do all the honors herself, Miss Esther rose to the occasion nobly, and presided with her usual grace, her unruffled calm giving no hint of the perturbation of spirit beneath. But late that evening when a meeting of the conspirators was held in the library, Miss Esther confided to Abraham Lincoln Dodd her doubts of the final success of her Matrimonial Bureau.

"To think," she said, "of that stupid Jean having a fight, a real fight with Putnam!"

"Oh, they're always squabbling," said Lincoln.

"Yes, but this time it's serious. Putnam told me so. And now Helen has offended Mr. Brewster and he's going away, and Lillian's case is equally hopeless."

"Why, what did you find out from father?"

"Why, it's the strangest thing, and I'm not sure that I ought to tell you."

"And I'm not sure, either, that I ought to tell you what Lillian said."

"Well, I must know what you learned, so

I'll tell you what I found out. Your father was awfully nice, and he said that he was very much in love with Lillian, — very much; and he thinks she cares for him. And he wants to marry her, but he thinks you would n't like it if he did."

"Me!" exclaimed Dodd; "why of course I want him to marry her, and I'll tell him so so that he will understand it!"

"No, no," said Miss Esther; "he said not to let you know anything about it. He did n't even want to suggest the idea to you for fear you'd be displeased."

"Well, if that does n't beat all! Lillian said just the same thing about you. She did n't say right out, you know, that she was fond of the Governor, but she said that even if she were she could n't marry him, for she felt sure that you would n't approve of the match."

"Me!" cried Miss Esther; "why of course I want her to marry him, and I'll tell her so so that she will understand it."

"No, don't say a word. She expressly said that she did n't want you to know she

had ever had such a thought, for fear it would displease you."

"Good gracious!" cried Miss Esther, exasperated beyond all endurance. "Was there ever such a lot of intractable men and ridiculous girls."

"Why don't you give them up?" suggested Lincoln.

"Never! I'm going to carry this thing through and you're going to help me as you agreed. I haven't brought these six people together and looked after them all summer, and brought them all to the very verge of success, to have my plans fail now. Jean and Putnam shall be persuaded to make up; though I don't know how it will be accomplished, for he's stubbornness itself and she's just as bad. Helen and Brewster must be reconciled, and that's harder yet, for she's as proud as Lucifer and he's more so. As to your father and Lillian —"

"Oh," interrupted Dodd, "if they care for each other, surely they can be brought around."

"Oh, I don't know — Lillian is a perverse

little witch; but anyhow, it shall be done. On that I am resolved, and if I don't succeed I will be the first Adams who ever failed in a great undertaking."

"And you will succeed," said Dodd, carried away by her eloquence.

"I certainly shall," said Miss Esther.

XVIII

With a solemn earnestness, more than indeed belonged to such a trifle. — *Othello*, v, 2.

When Brewster left Miss Esther's house, after telling her good-bye, he met Jack Remington.

"Hullo, Mr. Brewster," exclaimed Jack; "I thought you had gone away."

"I am going early in the morning," replied Brewster; "and I won't forget the book I promised to send you."

Jack turned and walked along by Brewster's side. "I'm sorry you're going," he said; "we've been good chums, haven't we?"

"Yes, we have," said Brewster, heartily; and then somehow the conversation seemed to flag. Jack was dimly conscious of this and tried to relieve the situation.

"I've just been over to Cousin Helen's house," he said, conversationally.

"Have you?" said Brewster, with an

unexpected exhibition of interest in his tone.

"Yes, and she gave me this," said Jack, producing a knife from his pocket; "see, it has a saw-blade and a screw-driver and a lot of things."

"So it has," said Brewster, looking at Jack's treasure critically. "It's much better than the one I gave you last week."

"Yes, it is; and what do you think, Cousin Helen traded with me. She gave me this and I gave her that one you gave me."

"You did? What made you think she wanted it?"

"Why, she asked me for it. She said if I'd give her that one she'd give me this."

"What did she want of an old knife like that?"

"I don't know. I was showing it to her and she said she wanted it, and so we traded."

"Did she know I gave it to you?"

"Yes, I told her it was an old one of yours; and besides she saw your initials on it, but she did n't mind that."

"Oh, she did n't!" Brewster walked on in silence for a moment. "Jack," he said, "it 's lucky you have that new knife. It is just what we want to use in working on the ship. I 'll come over to-morrow and we can finish it all up."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Jack; "I thought you were going away in the morning."

"I 've changed my mind," said Brewster.

If Jack was surprised at Brewster's sudden change of plans, Helen was none the less so when the next afternoon she saw him walk in at her gate.

"How do you do," she said, in her calm, sweet way. "I thought you had left us."

"No," said Brewster, easily; "I 've decided to stay a while longer."

He dropped naturally into his accustomed place at the end of the veranda. He had been at the Fairbanks house a great deal that summer and in consequence had assumed the air of a privileged guest.

"It 's a beautiful day," said Brewster, gazing affably into the atmosphere.

"Yes," said Helen, agreeingly. "It is a good day for reading aloud; and as you are going to stay longer, we may have time to finish the book we were reading yesterday."

This was a distinct concession on Helen's part, and Brewster accepted it as such. The book in question had been the cause of a violent argument the day before, which had resulted in his sudden determination to leave Whitfield. The immediate theme of the discussion had been certain ethical propositions which Brewster upheld and which seemed to him the very mainsprings of masculine action, but which Helen had denounced with a scornful pride that acknowledged no exceptions. So positive had been her assertions that he had been unable to escape the conviction that, knowing his views, she had deliberately intended to arraign him personally.

Helen had not meant this personal application — at least not to the extent that Brewster assumed. With all her uncompromising positivism and her insistence upon theoretical perfection, she was more than willing in in-

dividual cases to ignore short-comings, even in important directions, for the sake of the things which she found good. But Brewster did not know this, and when she had so specifically condemned traits which he knew he possessed, he was forced to believe that her opinion of him was unfavorable and unchangeable. And as he was conscious of his own growing regard for her, it seemed to him that the only thing to do was to go away at once.

The trifling episode of the penknife had changed all this. It seemed to prove that Helen's well-defined laws were capable of being at least slightly affected by the personal element. If she had cared enough for his old penknife to secure it for herself, then she had shown that there was a vulnerable point in her armor, and Brewster was not lacking in courage.

It was characteristic of him that the slight favorable indication should impart to his attitude an air of assured success. His exultation, which was out of all proportion to its cause, was evident. This was a mistake on

Brewster's part, for Helen saw it and resented it. And so he defeated his own ends; for the girl, especially sensitive to Brewster's moods, was annoyed at his mysterious air of triumph.

"Certainly," he said, most amiably; "I should be more than glad to read the book to you if I may; but this afternoon we are all going over to the Crossways Inn to supper. I have just come from Miss Esther's, who sent your invitation by me."

"Is everybody going?" asked Helen.

"Yes, in Lincoln's automobile."

"Oh, we 're all going together. Yes; certainly I will go."

"I thought I would drive you over myself, — may I?"

"Thank you, no. I prefer to go with the others."

"Very well," said Brewster; "we 'll go with them, then."

Chub crawled through the hedge and trotted across the lawn to the Adams house. Finding nobody on the East porch, she wan-

dered aimlessly about the grounds and finally found herself on the path which led down to the brook. This was forbidden territory, and Chub had not forgotten it, but this afternoon she was in an irresponsible frame of mind and paid no heed to the unwelcome voice of conscience. Besides, where the bridge was there grew some wonderful scarlet blossoms, and these the young explorer desired for her very own. Even from the edge of the lawn she could see them, but beyond, where the wood began, there was darkness. The temptation to go down there was irresistible, so on the baby went.

The scarlet blossoms were achieved without mishap, and then, lured by the fascinations of the unknown, she strayed a little further into the wood.

"I don't thee any puthy willowth," she said, "but Uncle Linkum thaid they lived here. I 'll wait a li'le while and p'rapth I 'll hear thome mew."

She sat down in the shade of a big tree to wait. She did not hear the mewing of the pussy-willows, but she found plenty

of things to interest her. A butterfly came. A black beetle labored with a leaf at her very feet, and she asked him questions concerning the welfare of his family. A squirrel chattered from a tree-top, and she scolded back at him. A bird perched on a dead twig and sang his very best song right at her. Then she sang — and then she went to sleep, the scarlet blossoms tightly clutched in her arms.

Chub's propensity for getting lost was recognized by the members of her family. As she explained it, she "just losed herself," and if she had thought of it, she might have added that the losing process was no part of her prearranged plans. All was well, and presently she was lost. Then people came and found her, and all was well again. It had never failed. She knew that somebody would eventually find her.

But on this occasion there was no conscious feeling of being lost. She slept peacefully, and the butterfly came back and hovered over the scarlet blossoms in her arms. The squirrel, with the insistent curiosity of

his kind, came down from his tree and looked at the baby at close range. The bird still continued his song — a sort of lullaby now — and Chub slept, while the people up at her home and at the Adams house began the search.

It was Putnam who found her, and he picked her up, still fast asleep, and carried her toward the house. Jean met him near the bridge. It was the first time he had seen her since the episode of the rose, and he wondered what attitude she would assume toward him.

"Where did you find her?" she asked.

"In the woods — asleep," he replied, shortly.

Jean turned and walked beside him toward Chub's home. Neither spoke. Presently the baby wakened. The scarlet flowers were still clasped tightly in her dimpled hand — crushed, perhaps, but they were none the less effective for all that.

She looked sleepily up into Putnam's eyes.

"For you," she said, offering the wilted blossoms.

"Did you pick them for me?" said Putnam.

"I don't know; but I will give them to you becauth I love you."

Putnam took the flowers. "Thank you, sweetheart," he said; but he looked squarely at Jean.

Jean stared straight ahead, but she saw his expression.

"Do you care for flowers?" she asked.

"Yes, when they are given to me."

"Not otherwise?"

"Never but once otherwise."

"When was that?"

"Oh, long ago."

"Before you knew me?"

"Well, it was before I knew you as well as I do now."

"Tell me about it," said Jean.

"I don't think you'd be interested in the story."

"Yeth," said Chub, "tell me thtory."

"Well," began Putnam, "once upon a time there was a little girl."

"A very pretty little girl," said Jean.

"And she had a rose," continued Putnam, "and a man —"

"A perfectly horrid man," said Jean.

"Asked her for it," Putnam went on; "and what do you think?"

"She gave it to him," said Chub, "becauth she loved him."

"So she did," said Putnam, "and he carried it with him always after that."

"Ith he got it yet?" asked Chub.

"Yes," said Putnam; "he has it yet."

"What for?" questioned Chub; "it mutht be all dead."

When the truant had been returned to her anxious family, Putnam and Jean went back to Miss Esther's.

"Had you finished the story of the rose?" she asked.

"Why, would you like to hear more of it?"

"Not particularly; but I would like to have some one care enough for my roses to carry them always and always."

Without a word Putnam produced his

pocket-book and took from it a withered rose.

"This is the one you gave me," said he.

"So it is," said Jean, complacently; "I knew you'd keep it."

XIX

She is beautiful and therefore to be woo'd. — *1 Henry VI*, v, 3.

THE horse had seen better days — better in the sense that he had been in his earlier youth a better horse. Grown old in the service of a livery stable in the town of Farmington — the next one to Whitfield on the left as you go from Utica — he still maintained a sort of dignity and absolute safety which made him a valuable asset when his owner had a request from timid women for what is technically known as a "rig."

He drew a phaeton of the type built on the lines of Central New York styles of carriage building — distinctly unattractive and ungraceful. Driving the horse was a young woman whose impetuosity urged her steed to greater efforts in the matter of speed. The horse wore no "blinders," and when his driver told him to get up, and beat him

gingerly with a whip, he glanced casually back at her over his shoulder, as who should say, "If I go faster I may be very dangerous." So he strolled on, and Julia Fowler's efforts, directed toward swifter locomotion, met with no response from him. He knew his business. He was a safe horse, and he did not propose to risk his reputation by any undue exertion.

Miss Fowler herself was of a type distinctly different from that represented by her equipage. She could by no chance have been the product of Central New York. Possibly her ancestors might have been, but she was urban to her finger tips. Suburbanity had no accent on her appearance. Her beauty was of a spectacular order. She was the type of the twentieth century — its best expression — and she had come to Farmington to rest at the boarding-house of one Mrs. Moore. She had tired of it in a week, and her excursion to Whitfield was for the purpose of finding a place which might prove more attractive to her exacting demands.

She had been told that a certain Mrs. Hemingway in Whitfield conducted a boarding-house, and she was in search of this establishment when she caught sight of the Adams house. This seemed an ideal place to spend a few weeks, and being by no means timid, Miss Fowler concluded to make the attempt to induce the owner of the place to take her in for a time. She turned in at the gate, and when she saw Miss Esther on the veranda she was quite positive that she had found exactly what she was looking for.

Miss Esther watched the stranger as she jumped out of the phaeton, ran up the steps, and without invitation seated herself in one of the large rocking-chairs.

"Don't mind me," she said, pleasantly. "I always come in like that. I am Julia Fowler, and I am staying over in Farmington, but I don't like it there, and somebody told me that Whitfield was lovely, and that Mrs. Hemingway kept a very nice boarding-house. I was on my way there when I noticed this house, and I thought I should

like it here a great deal better. So won't you please take me for a couple of weeks? I'm awfully good-natured and I won't make a bit of trouble."

Miss Esther looked at her visitor and came to the conclusion that she was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen.

It was not only a beauty of feature and coloring; but the vivacity and charm of Julia Fowler were of a degree which exceeded anything Miss Esther had ever known. Though her manner was gay and informal to the verge of sauciness, yet it was tinged with a delightful deference, and Miss Esther proved herself no exception to the rule that whoever met Julia Fowler fell immediately under the spell of her wonderful charm.

"Nonsense, child," said Miss Esther, smiling at her pretty visitor; "I don't take boarders, but you will like it at Mrs. Hemingway's, I'm sure. She can make you very comfortable."

"But I like this house so much better," said Julia, coaxingly; "and I'm sure you have room enough."

"Yes, of course, there are rooms enough in the Adams house, but we never take boarders."

"Oh, is this the Adams house?" asked Julia; "and are you Miss Adams, Miss Esther Adams? I have often heard of you in Farmington."

"Yes, I am the one," and Miss Esther smiled graciously. Somehow people always smiled graciously on Miss Fowler.

"Oh, then do let me stay. I have heard so much about your house and your library; and I'll keep to myself when you don't want me around, and I'll be jolly good company when you do. You live alone, don't you?"

Like a flash Miss Esther realized what it would be to have a young woman with such compelling attractions in her house, or, indeed, for that matter, in Whitfield at all. The three affairs which she was managing seemed to be complicated enough as it was, without an additional disturbing element. Putnam, she knew, would rave over her. Lincoln Dodd would flirt desperately, and

she felt sure that Winthrop Brewster must also inevitably succumb to this bewitching beauty. It was apparent, then, to Miss Esther that it would never do to have Miss Fowler remain in Whitfield.

Miss Esther's three girls were sweet and attractive, but she well knew that they would not shine by comparison with this exquisite and experienced woman of the world. Though probably not older in years, Miss Fowler was far more sophisticated than the Whitfield girls, and her own personality, helped by her social training, gave her a fascination which could not otherwise be attained.

The imminent danger of this catastrophe almost stunned Miss Esther. Something must be done, and that quickly, to prevent Miss Fowler's staying in Whitfield. In consequence her attitude towards her visitor changed instantly.

"Yes, I live alone," she said, "and it is from preference. I have small need for company, for I am never lonely, and I could not think of taking a boarder even

for a short time. Pray do not ask me again."

"Indeed, I shall ask you again," said Julia, with one of her most ingratiating smiles. "I shall keep on coaxing until I persuade you to say yes."

Had circumstances been otherwise, nothing would have pleased Miss Esther better than to have granted the request and taken this most attractive young woman into her house for a fortnight. This fact made it difficult for her to continue her refusals; but, awake to the seriousness of the situation, she answered decidedly, "No, I shall never say yes. I am not of a vacillating nature, and rarely change my mind. It is quite impossible for me to take you. Now that I think of it, I don't believe that you would be satisfied at Mrs. Hemingway's, either. They are plain people, and live very plainly."

"That would just suit me," said Julia. "I came up here for rest and quiet, and I love a simple country home."

"But it is very dull in Whitfield," con-

tinued Miss Esther. "There are no gayeties of any sort."

"That would just suit me, too. I have a surfeit of gayety at home in the winter."

Baffled at every turn, and determined to accomplish her end, Miss Esther deliberately drew upon her imagination. "There are five little children at Mrs. Hemingway's, and they are a most spoiled, disagreeable lot. I am sure they'd make your life a burden there."

"That alters the case," said Julia, decidedly. "I detest spoiled children. How old are they?"

"I don't know," said Miss Esther, a little vaguely, which was only natural, considering the fact that there were really no children at the Hemingway house. "About four or five years old, I think."

"Oh, I don't mind such little children," said Julia, airily; "but I dislike them when they get to be about ten years old."

"Oh, there are several as old as that, too," declared Miss Esther, whose imagination was equal to juveniles of any age.

"Then I won't go there," said Julia. "I 'm surprised that she has any boarders. I think you might let me stay here."

"I asked you not to mention that again," said Miss Esther, with a sudden exhibition of the Adams dignity; "but if you really want country home life, there is a very delightful place at Westfield that I am sure would please you."

"Where is Westfield?"

"About eight miles the other side of Farmington."

"I 'll drive over there to-morrow," said Julia, "and look at the place, and if I don't like it I 'll come back here."

This bit of bravado was accompanied by such a winning smile that Miss Esther could not respond as sternly as she would have liked to do.

"Will you have tea on the veranda or on Lieutenant Adams's porch?" asked Nora, appearing at the door.

"On the East porch," said Miss Esther, shortly.

"Oh, may n't I stay to tea?" exclaimed

Julia. "Please let me. I'll be very good, and go away immediately after."

"Excuse me one moment," said Miss Esther, without answering her guest's question.

She went to the East porch where she knew Lincoln Dodd was reading. He was the only one of her guests at home.

"Lincoln," she exclaimed, "come to my rescue, and come quick. What under the sun am I going to do?"

"What in the world 's the matter?" asked Dodd.

"Oh, it 's dreadful. The most beautiful girl in the world is on the front veranda."

"Command my services," said Lincoln, rising with alacrity. "What makes her so dreadful? Is she a maniac?"

"No, indeed. I only wish she were. She 's perfectly charming."

"What am I to do for you? Do you want me to marry her?"

"Don't be foolish. But don't you see I expect the people home to tea at any minute now, and if any of those men see that

raving beauty, they 'll fall in love with her on the spot."

"Of course they will," said Dodd. "Give her to me. I 'll take her off to a desert island."

"No, but I want you to take her home in your automobile. That 's the only way I can get rid of her."

"Where is her home? How did she come?"

"She came in a forlorn old gig, but I can let Michael take that home for her. And mind, now, you 're not to make yourself too entertaining, or ask her to come again, or let her know that I have any young men staying here. She 's the most dangerous thing I 've ever seen. You get your machine and come around in front just as if you were going out for a drive, and I 'll do the rest."

"All right," said Dodd. "I 'll go, but I don't know when I 'll be back. Don't wait tea for me."

"Now don't go scouring all over the country with her. She lives in Farming-

"SUPPOSE YOU TAKE MISS FOWLER HOME"

ton, and you can go there and back in an hour."

"Perhaps I can and perhaps I can't," said Dodd, as he ran down the steps.

"And hurry," called Miss Esther after him. "There 's no time to be lost."

Miss Esther returned to the veranda, and in a few moments Lincoln came whirling up from the stables.

"Ah, Mr. Dodd," called Miss Esther, "are you going anywhere in particular?"

"No," said Lincoln, pleasantly; "just out for a little spin."

"Well, then, suppose you take Miss Fowler home. My dear," she said, turning to the young lady, "you 'd like to drive over with Mr. Dodd, would n't you?"

"Oh, ever so much," cried Julia, showing her most engaging dimples and laughing down at Dodd. "But what will become of my fractious steed?"

"Michael can drive him home for you," said Miss Esther. "Run along quick, now. Mr. Dodd does n't like to wait."

As the pair disappeared, Miss Esther drew

a long breath of relief. Her manœuvre had been accomplished none too quickly, for they were hardly out of sight before Brewster, Putnam, and George Washington Dodd came strolling in to tea.

"That was a narrow escape," she thought. "The times would have been very much out of joint if I had not set them right. I have rescued the Matrimonial Bureau from the jaws of one more danger."

XX

Make feasts, invite friends and proclaim the banns. — *Taming of the Shrew*, iii, 2.

THE three men came up to the East porch where Miss Esther gave them their tea. She was plainly in a mood of the utmost complacency. Nor were her guests less complacent. George Washington Dodd, with the knowledge that he had arranged his little comedy quite to his liking, was placidly awaiting its working out. Brewster was in a seventh heaven. The trifling affair of the penknife was to him a wind-proving straw, and, always self-confident, he felt now not the slightest doubt of his ability to win Helen Fairbanks.

However, as time went on and the three girls did not appear, the edge of Miss Esther's complacency was dulled, and she grew more and more perturbed.

"I don't see what can be keeping them," she said. "They said they 'd come over for

tea, and then we would all start for the Cross-ways together."

"Where 's Lincoln?" said his father.

"He went off to do an errand for me," said Miss Esther, casually. "He 'll be back very soon. I told him particularly not to dawdle by the way. If we start by six we 'll have plenty of time."

But at half-past five Dodd had not returned, nor had any of the girls come. Miss Esther began to show signs of nervousness. Putnam's brow clouded, and the senior Dodd began to fidget.

At twenty minutes to six a decided gloom had settled upon the whole party, and at ten minutes of six, consternation was palpably apparent.

"I can't imagine why those girls don't come," said Miss Esther.

"At least one of them," said Putnam. "She said she 'd be here at five."

Miss Esther smiled happily at her cousin; but her face clouded again as she said, "I wish Lincoln would come, then we could start and pick up the girls on the way."

Six o'clock struck, and still there were no signs of the expected ones.

"I believe I'll go over to Miss Fairbanks's," said Brewster, "and see why they don't come."

"I'll go with you," said Putnam. "I hope nothing has happened to her."

"Your pronoun is ambiguous," said Dodd, "but never mind; we understand."

Before the investigating party could start, the automobile came romping up the driveway, and in it were Lincoln Dodd and the three girls. They all seemed to be in unusually good spirits.

"We 've had the loveliest ride," cried Jean. "We've been over to Farmington!"

"What!" cried Miss Esther.

"Yes," began Helen; "we went with Mr. Dodd and the loveliest —"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Miss Esther, "I've no doubt you had a lovely time."

"She 's certainly a peach," said Lincoln, winking at Miss Esther.

"Oh, you mean your automobile. Has she acted well to-day? She certainly is

a beauty," said Miss Esther, fearful lest he refer more explicitly to Julia Fowler.

"Yes, she certainly is a beauty," replied Dodd; "and she acted very well."

"Come, come," said Miss Esther, still a bit nervously; "we must be starting."

"All right," said Lillian; "and on the way I 'll tell you how Mr. Dodd picked us girls up and took us over to Farmington. As a traveling companion we had the most beautiful —"

"Do you consider Lincoln Dodd such a raving beauty," said Miss Esther, looking at him critically.

"Oh, I did n't mean him," replied Lillian; "I —"

"Oh, then you mean Helen? We all acknowledge her beauty."

"I wish she had meant me," said Helen; "but she meant —"

"She meant me!" cried Jean, whose quick wit perceived that Miss Esther did not care to discuss Julia Fowler.

"You would be a beautiful traveling companion," said Putnam, judicially, "if your

hat were on straight and that bunchy fluff which is supposed to decorate the back of your neck had n't twisted itself around under one ear."

"That 's where it belongs," said Jean. "That 's where they 're wearing them now, and my hat is at the very latest fashionable angle. I 'm not one of those women who get all disheveled just because they take a little automobile ride."

"We 're obliged to believe your statement," said Lincoln Dodd; "but you are certainly giving a very good imitation of the type."

"Well, I don't look a bit more tumbled than your friend Julia did. Her veil hung by one pin."

"Julia who?" asked Putnam, looking up.

Jean caught Miss Esther's bothered look, and good-naturedly helped her out. "I don't mean Julia, exactly," she said. "I mean—er — Alice."

"Alice who?" inquired the elder Dodd.

"Alice Ben Bolt," said Miss Esther, shortly.

"Oh, that one? By the way, did anybody ever remember her? I always hear people tunefully inquiring."

"I did n't know she wore an automobile coat," said Lincoln, doubtfully. "At any rate, her costume must have been awfully queer."

"How do you know what she wore?" said Lillian. "Have you ever seen her picture?"

"No, but the song says they fitted a slab of granite so gray; it must have been a very superior tailor that could do it."

"All women look well in gray," said Brewster, glancing approvingly at Helen.

"Do you know, I like green best," said George Washington Dodd, staring at Lillian's crisp linen costume.

"This is n't green; it 's reseda," said Lillian, scornfully; "and if I 'd known you 'd like it, I would n't have worn it."

When Dodd admired Lillian's gown Miss Esther looked distinctly pleased, but when that young lady spoke so rudely in reply her hopes fell again. Dodd, however, realized

that she was reminding him of his almost forgotten rôle, and taking his cue, he replied, "I don't like it. I said I liked green."

"Huh!" said Lillian.

Crossways Inn is one of the few survivals of that class of hostelry that had its beginnings in the eighteenth century. Around many of them hamlets sprang up, — some grew into cities. In the stage-coach days they were the resting places of the weary travelers. When the railroads came the travelers rushed by in trains, and the inns were forgotten.

No hamlet had sprung up about Crossways. Standing at the intersection of two country roads it had held its own through a century and a half of varying fortunes. There was little travel thereabouts, until the automobiles came. Then, after a time, the drivers of the machines came to understand that at Crossways there was to be had a dinner like grandmother used to cook, and now scarcely a day went by without some merry party from Richfield Springs, Farm-

ington, or even Utica, making a pilgrimage in the direction of the fried chicken and green corn in the season.

It was at a dinner of this sort that the Matrimonial Bureau entertained its clients. If gayety be a proof of appreciation, then were the clients, though unsuspecting of their claim to that title, deeply appreciative.

"This would be a fine place to establish a rest-cure," said Lillian. "It is the quietest place I ever saw."

"If you'll establish one," said George Washington Dodd, "I'll be press agent for you. I'll engage to get you a lot of patients."

"I'll do better than that," said Lincoln; "I'll be a patient."

"Good idea," said Putnam; "you need a rest-cure."

"He does," said his father; "he certainly needs to be cured of the resting habit. It has become chronic with him."

"What will be your course of treatment?" asked Helen.

"At first I shall only have the patients

stop resting three times a day," said Lillian, consideringly.

"For meals?" suggested Lincoln.

"Yes; and then after that, oftener, until they can go without resting for an hour at a time."

"A whole hour?" asked Jean.

"Yes; and if they show signs of a relapse I shall make them work."

"Work!" exclaimed Lincoln; "then I withdraw my application."

"Oh," said Lillian, "I don't mean manual labor; I mean brain work."

"Oh, that would be the same to me as resting. My brain works automatically without any exertion on my part."

"I've often thought so," observed Putnam.

"Yes," said Lincoln; "it's a great convenience. I just set it going and then I go off and leave it."

"Where did you leave it to-night?" asked Jean, innocently.

"I left it at home, working out a great problem. You see, Miss Esther and I —"

"This is good pie," said Miss Esther, hurriedly.

"It is," said Lincoln. "As I was saying, Miss Esther and I are very much worried —"

"This is good pie," said Miss Esther, glaring at him.

"Yes, I said it was," said Lincoln. "Miss Esther and I are trying very hard —"

"This is good pie," remarked Miss Esther, determinedly.

"That speech is getting to be a habit with you, Cousin Esther," said Putnam. "Why don't you take something for it?"

"Well," said Lincoln's father, "if you have quite finished that exciting story about yourself and Miss Esther, I will tell you a little story. Miss Hastings and I —"

"This is good pie," said Lillian, blushing furiously.

"It seems to have gone to your head," remarked Jean, looking at Lillian, inquiringly.

"Miss Hastings and I," went on Dodd, "are engaged to be married."

To say that Miss Esther's face beamed with delight, would be an inadequate expression of the illumination that took place on her countenance. She fairly radiated happiness and coruscated with joy.

"One home, and two on bases," cried Lincoln, exultantly; but no one heard him in the tumult and the shouting consequent upon the announcement.

As is usual with the inspirers of great movements, Miss Esther was entirely forgotten at the moment of final triumph. Oblivious to this, however, she sat in silent rapture, gloating over her first and irrevocable success.

"Ah! King John," she said, though not aloud, "at last Victory doth perch upon one of my dancing banners; and as to the other two, I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my mouth, let no dog bark!"

XXI

A contract of true love to celebrate. — *The Tempest*, iv, 1.

WHITFIELD'S observance of holidays was in the nature of a religious rite. The patriotism of the Fourth of July, as shown in the firing of the anvil in the early morning, the speeches in the grove, and the reading of the Declaration of Independence, invariably by Dr. Bushnell, was all that the Father of his Country could have desired. Christmas and Thanksgiving had lost none of their original character. The flippant might have observed the groaning of boards from one end of the town to the other. May Day was a triumph of maidens crowned with wilted wild flowers holding court in rickety bowers. Other days had their importance; in fact any holiday which had any excuse for being was seized upon and made much of by the Whitfield citizens.

But above and beyond all others, in the hearts of the countrymen, was Circus Day.

For the days intervening between the posting of the bills announcing its coming and the fateful day of its arrival, there were fierce debates at the post-office and at the blacksmith shop concerning the relative merits of the hippopotamus and the other animals. The postmaster himself averred that the man-eating tiger and the hippopotamus, whose wide-opened jaws showed glistening teeth of vast size, were much more fearsome beasts than the Behemoth of Holy Writ, and although this staggered the ultra-orthodox, yet were they fain to believe it.

The fact that the people of Whitfield had seen for many successive years the same posters representing the same gaudily attired ladies whose skirts were the soul of wit itself, poised on toe-tip upon the same madly careering charger, in no way interfered with their interest in them.

This interest perennially expressed itself in long and deep arguments, embracing various views which resolved themselves finally into a generally commendatory condemnation.

The laws of the Medes and Persians were laxly obeyed in comparison with the unwritten but traditional law which demanded that every citizen take his or her nearest child relative to see the show. Census reports, however, showed the proportion of about one child to seventeen grown people. But this rather aided than hindered the law-abiding citizens, and uncles, aunts, and cousins cheerfully accompanied their particular portion of the juvenile audience.

The fact that there were no children in the Adams house in no wise disconcerted Miss Esther and her guests. They appropriated Jack and Chub, and days before the circus, had arranged to escort them. Jack announced that he had already been invited to attend the function by Dr. Bushnell, but this, of course, made no difference. Chub, being unattached, graciously signified her willingness to attend.

"I have theen the thircuth," Chub announced. "It ith on the big, high fenth. There are lionth and 'pottymutheth and a beauty horth with a lovely lady on it

— oh, a lovely lady, jutht like Couthin Helen."

"I noticed the picture," said Brewster. "It is indeed just like Miss Fairbanks."

"But that is n't the real circus," explained Helen. "Those are only the pictures of what you are going to see when you get there."

"Oh," said Chub; "and will you weally wide on the horth on your tippy-toeth?"

"If she does n't, somebody else will," said Brewster.

Another traditional law required that the country people for miles around, as well as the villagers, should assemble at the railway station to see the circus train come in. As its arrival was inconsiderately timed at four in the morning, this necessitated early rising. But this necessity was cheerfully met, the more so in that it made Circus Day just that much longer.

At the Adams house all the traditions were strictly observed. Alarm-clocks were set for half-past three, and after a hasty cup of coffee Lincoln hustled Miss Esther, his

father, and Putnam into the automobile, picked up Brewster and the three girls, and they reached the station just in time for the first act of the day's play.

To the men of the party the sight was a novel one, and not uninteresting. The sun was rising much as usual, although George Washington Dodd remarked that he thought the sun was always up a few feet in the morning. He was not given to getting up solely to see the spectacle, and though he had a dim idea that there were such things as sunrises, raved over by poets and such persons, he found the picturesqueness of the real thing of a character to call forth approving remarks from him. "Pretty good work for such a young sun," he said, looking at the long streaks of light that shot across the fields and made a spectacular gathering of the otherwise commonplace crowd that swarmed over the railroad tracks. Into this crowd the locomotive puffed and snorted, and children shrieked with delight, while their elders — though hardly less vociferous, were no less eager. Vehicles of all

descriptions lined the roadway. Luncheon baskets were in evidence in the democrat wagons. There was a superfluity of whiskers of varying shades of color and cut, and alpaca dresses, still showing the wrinkles of long-time packing, gave evidence that the holiday spirit was rampant in the hearts, even of the staid grandmothers and the mothers.

"I 'll bet," said Lincoln, "that every one of them is possessed of some haircloth chairs, and is distinctly proud of a certain bunch of wax fruit under a glass bell in the parlor."

The small boys stood about, ecstatically rubbing bare foot against bare leg, and letting off sympathetic grunts of helpfulness as the men of the circus train pushed and shoved and lifted the big wagons and other paraphernalia off the cars. From one of the closed cages came the roar of a lion. Little girls clutched their mothers' hands in an agony of fear and delight. These sounds were the foretaste of the joys to come.

The people who had come from the surrounding country prepared to make a full day of it camped under the trees in the grove

near the circus grounds. The men sat about and discussed the outlook for the crops, while the women prepared a breakfast. The children stared, wide-open-eyed, at the closed cages, from which from time to time there issued strangely fascinating growlings of wild beasts. The circus men laid out the ring and raised the tent, and the side-show men, being quick in action, insistently proclaimed the presence of the bearded lady, the educated pig, the living skeleton, and the strong man who could shiver rocks with his fist. From the top of the big tent-pole a wire was stretched, and from the dizzy height a wonderful woman, clad in tightly fitting pink, slid boldly to the ground. This was in the nature of a daring advertisement of the wonderful, magnificent, marvelous, myriad of startling feats to be seen during the performance.

"Well, I swan!" exclaimed an elderly man, with whiskers of an ancient design; "I should think she'd of fell off'n that slim wire."

But the villagers, not being obliged to

camp under the trees, returned to their homes for breakfast. In celebration of Circus Day, and incidentally because it might materially assist her plans, Miss Esther had a house-party, and the clients of her Bureau made merry at the Adams house breakfast.

"We 'll see the morning parade," said George Washington Dodd, "from the front fence."

"I choose to sit on the gate-post," said Jean.

"You can have one gate-post," said Mr. Dodd, "but I want the other myself."

"One is enough," said Jean. "I rarely use two at once."

"And then this afternoon we 'll take the children and Dr. Bushnell to the performance, and this evening we 'll go by ourselves."

"And stay to the concert," said Helen.

"And then we 'll all walk home in the moonlight," continued Dodd. "My fiancée is very romantic."

"It must be very nice to have a romantic fiancée," said Putnam.

"You never will have," said Jean. "No romantic girl could possibly accept you."

"This is good pie," said Lincoln, gazing off into space.

"Do they have nice circuses in Europe?" asked Lillian.

"Yes," replied Dodd, instructively; "they have a very large one in Rome, and Paris is a good deal of a circus all by itself, as you shall see."

"Yes," said Lillian, happily; "I 'm so glad I 'm going. I 've always loved a circus, and if Paris is anything like it, I know I shall like that city."

"People always take their little boys to the circus," said Lincoln, plaintively, "and I think you might take me — Ma-ma!"

"All right, son, you shall go if you want to — the next time we go," replied Lillian, kindly.

"Oh, that 's what I meant," said Lincoln. "Of course I 'd be a bother this time."

"Indeed you would," said his father. "We 're going for pleasure."

"When do you sail?" asked Brewster.

"I 've tickets for the fifteenth," said Dodd.

"So soon?" said Brewster, in surprise.

"Yes; is n't it lovely," said Lillian. "I always did like to get married in a hurry."

"I don't care how soon you get married," said Jean, "so long as you wait till after this year's Circus Day, and come home before the next one."

"Next Circus Day you may be away on your own wedding trip," said Miss Esther.

"No," said Jean; "I 'd never marry anybody who would take me away from Whitfield on Circus Day."

"January would be a safe month," said Putnam, musingly.

Jean's only reply to this sally was a glance which was meant to be withering, but somehow it turned into a vivid blush.

"Do you know the address of a good flagmaker in the city, Governor?" said Lincoln. "I want to telegraph an order for some banners."

"Do!" said Miss Esther.

XXII

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd ? — *Richard III*, i, 2.

ALTHOUGH the afternoon performance was scheduled for three o'clock, Jack and Chub, anxious to be in time, arrived at the Adams house while Miss Esther and her guests were still at breakfast.

"We 're all weddy," announced Chub, consciously patting down her starched white ruffles, and turning her back to give a better view of her pink sash bows.

Jack, no less conscious of his new sailor suit, but striving manfully not to call undue attention to it, remarked, casually, "I s'pose we 're a little early, but we 'll wait till you 're ready to go."

"How fortunate," said Lincoln; "then you 'll be here to help us watch the morning parade go by."

"Yeth," said Chub; "we 're going to thit on the gate-potht, and you can hold uth on."

"Huh," said Jack; "I don't need to be held on. I was n't last year, and I did n't fall off but once, and that was when the elephant hollered."

"I will be held on," said Chub, "by Uncle Linkum."

"You 'll have to sit backward, Chub, so the folks in the parade can see that big sash of yours."

Chub said nothing, but after a few moments' deep thought began tugging at her pink sash so effectively that she finally landed the big bow exactly in front.

"There!" she said, with a satisfied sigh.

By eleven o'clock the children were on their respective gate-posts, Miss Esther and Dr. Bushnell occupying large arm-chairs in the gateway between them. The rest of the party were ranged along the fence on either side like birds on a telegraph wire.

Rocking amiably, his finger tips together in an attitude of judicial consideration, Dr. Bushnell filled the hour of waiting with pleasant discourse. Whitfield always expected to wait an hour after the scheduled

time for the arrival of the circus parade, and in this it was never disappointed.

"It has gratified me to note," the Doctor said, "that the proprietors of this exhibition have among their collected animals a fine specimen of the wombat."

"Whath a wombat?" asked Chub.

"A wombat," went on Dr. Bushnell, with the air of imparting information to a large audience, — "a wombat is simply a *Phascolomys ursinus*. It is fond of hay — "

"We 'll take some hay along for the wombat," said Lincoln, kindly.

" — which he bites into short pieces with his knife-edged teeth. As the poet has it,

> Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
> For 't is — for 't is — "

"Their nature to," put in Miss Esther, involuntarily.

"True," continued Dr. Bushnell; "and it is the wombat's nature to excavate the earth until it forms a deep tunnel. The wombat is by no means an active animal, but trudges

along with a heavy, rolling waddle, like the gait of a very fat bear."

"I have always admired the gait of a very fat bear," said Brewster, dispassionately. "There is something peculiarly attractive and exceedingly graceful about it."

Dr. Bushnell was a trifle ruffled by this slighting allusion to his favored animal, and went on with some asperity.

"A wombat, my dear sir, is far from being an ungraceful animal. I take it you have never seen one on its native heath. Indeed, a perfect wombat, a perfect wombat—"

"Nobly planned," said Miss Esther, helpfully.

At this Lincoln Dodd fell off the fence.

"Ho!" said Chub; "Uncle Linkum wath going to hold me on, and now he 'th felled off himthelf!"

Except that Lincoln was nearly choked to death by Chub in her exuberance over the little white ponies, the parade passed without accident. Dr. Bushnell gazed eagerly at the open cages, and disappointedly at the

closed ones, hoping to see the promised wombat. He philosophically met his failure to find it by an unshaken confidence in its appearance at the show proper.

At the afternoon performance Lincoln took especial charge of Chub. This proved to be a more arduous undertaking than he had anticipated. Twice he pulled her out from under the seats, and once he rescued her from apparent instant death at the feet of the elephant. He was also obliged to temper generosity with wisdom in the matter of pink lemonade and peanuts.

Miss Esther had started under the mistaken impression that she was taking charge of Jack, but he soon made it evident that his understanding of the case was that she was in his charge. He grandly offered her prize packages of gum. He bought for her a complete programme of the whole show, and carefully scrutinized the numbers on their tickets and seats to make sure that they corresponded.

Miss Esther herself was enjoying the after-

noon. Aside from the entertainment provided by the circus troupe, she was delightedly entertained by the performances of her own immediate circle. Lillian and Mr. Dodd were a most exemplary engaged couple. Jean and Putnam, if not announced allies, were at least preserving an armed truce. As for Helen and Brewster, the more she saw them together, the more she thought that they were born for each other, and she felt confident that soon they would realize this for themselves. In consequence of this, it seemed to Miss Esther that the last cloud was dissipated and that the intents of her Matrimonial Bureau were practically the same as fulfilled.

To the exclusion of the startlingly incredible feats in the ring, Miss Esther's thoughts were entirely concentrated on the pleasant outcome of her plans. It was with an expression of blank surprise, and a half conscious realization of impending disaster, that she looked up suddenly and saw Julia Fowler coming toward her along the aisle. Her first impulse was to stay the invader's ad-

vance at any cost. Involuntarily, she half rose from her seat and glared at the intruder. Her unwelcoming expression was entirely lost on Miss Fowler, who rushed up to her and shook her warmly by both hands.

"I 'm so glad to see you again!" she cried.

"How do you do?" said Miss Esther, perfunctorily, and with a frigidity of manner that would have repelled a less volatile personage than Julia Fowler.

"Is n't the circus perfectly lovely!" she exclaimed. "I 'm enjoying it so much, and when I saw your party I flew right over here, and Lieutenant Adams has asked me to go home to dinner with you all, and come back to the show to-night — and may I go?"

However much she may have wanted to, Miss Esther's ideas of hospitality would not allow her to say no. "Certainly," she said; and if the invitation was not noticeably heartfelt, Julia seemed to overlook any lack of enthusiasm. Of course, Miss Esther still realized, and more emphatically than ever as she looked at Julia, the dangers involved.

Mr. Dodd was out of the running. Lincoln's heart interests were not her affair; but Putnam was decidedly susceptible, and her ideas of Brewster's intentions toward Helen were as yet so unauthorized that she was by no means certain that they might not be easily swerved. Still, the mischief was done; the blow had fallen, and as a consequence, the Adams pluck rose triumphant.

But Miss Esther had crossed her bridge before she came to it. At dinner that night Julia was a decided acquisition, and charmed everybody. But the two men for whom Miss Esther had feared the most were not unduly interested in the fair visitor. Indeed, the only one who surrendered at sight was Lincoln Dodd. This state of mind, however, on Lincoln's part was not necessarily a permanence, as Miss Esther well knew. Putnam, of course, showed the courteous deference and gentle consideration which all women received from him, but there was no apparent undercurrent of personal interest; Brewster maintained his usual attitude of polite indifference, which, however, had in

it no lack of civility, but neither did it show any trace of a special attraction.

Athough Whitfield went to the afternoon performance ostensibly for the benefit of its juvenile element, in the evening it attended the show frankly and openly for its own amusement. Following this precedent the Adams house party at eight o'clock again bundled into the automobile and started for the tent. The men vowed that it was the hardest day's work they had ever done in their lives, but the girls took the day as a matter of course, and would not hear of omitting any part of the regulation programme.

Miss Esther's complacency was restored by the turn affairs had taken, and her mind was relieved regarding Julia's invasion. Therefore, she started off in the same high spirits that had marked the early afternoon.

The circus managers, desirous of saving every possible scrap of time, had facilitated the midnight moving of their paraphernalia by taking the roof off the tent before the

beginning of the evening performance. After sunset, and if the weather permitted, they always did this. The plan was acceptable to the audience, and the general effect of the crowded tent, open to the starry heavens, appealed especially to Brewster as a picturesquely humorous situation. Desirous of seeing it all from the best possible viewpoint, he asked Helen to sit with him in the top row of seats. The rest preferred seats nearer the ground, Lincoln devoting himself to Julia, and Miss Esther, supremely satisfied, listening willingly to Dr. Bushnell's oratorical periods.

"What a curious picture," said Helen, as she took her seat.

"Yes," replied Brewster; "I never saw anything just like it before."

"I have seen this every year," said Helen, "but it always impresses me anew. The incongruity of the tawdry, noisy glitter of the scene below, compared to the calm beauty of the stars above, is —"

"Is, perhaps, the ultimate contrast?"

"Yes, that is exactly what I mean. Why

is it, I wonder, that I can't express myself as I want to? You always seem to know just what word to use."

"Perhaps I know more words than you do."

"No, I know words enough, but I never can command them at the time I want them, though they often come to me when it is too late to use them."

"Like Thackeray's cab wit," suggested Brewster.

"Yes, I can quite picture him, disconsolate in his cab, saying to himself the bright things which he ought to have said an hour before. I have done the same thing."

"You should have a preceptor, one who could teach you to say the right thing at the right time."

"It would have to be one who would not only understand my moods, but be in thorough sympathy with them; some one of —"

"Quick perception," said Brewster.

"Yes; and gentle —"

"Instincts."

"Yes; and a way of teaching that would not make me self-conscious or embarrassed."

"That goes without saying if the teacher be of a true perception and sympathy."

"*It might as well be you!*" sang a sextette of clowns through six megaphones in the ring.

"So it might," said Brewster; "in fact it might much better be me than anybody else. I think I will begin now."

"I wish you would," said Helen; "I do, honestly, but I'm afraid you will find it a hopeless task. There are so many things that you know so much more about than I do—"

"*There are a few*," came bellowing up from the megaphone sextette.

"The megaphone men seem inclined to help out," said Brewster.

"Yes, and I am grateful to any one who will help me."

"May I try, Helen, though gratitude is not the return I ask?"

"*I may love you too well to let you go*," vociferated the insistent megaphones.

Helen looked at Brewster. "The megaphone men *are* helping," she said.

"Would you have said that if you had thought of it in time?" he asked.

"Yes," said Helen.

XXIII

And certainly a woman's thought runs before her actions. — *As You Like It*, iv, 1.

"WHERE'S Putnam?" asked Miss Esther, coming out on the East porch the next morning.

"Don't know," said Lincoln. "I have n't seen him since breakfast."

Chub, seated on a low stool directly in front of Lincoln, regarding him with worshiping eyes, volunteered the information that she "thaw him picking a lot of wotheth," and that he had afterward gone out of the gate and walked rapidly up the street.

"Ah," said Miss Esther, with a satisfied smile, "I suppose he has gone over to Jean's."

"I thuppothe tho," Chub acquiesced.

But when, a little later, Jean came over to the Adams house, Miss Esther looked at her aghast. "Where's Putnam?" she said, sternly.

"That 's what I want to know," said Jean. "He asked me to play tennis with him this morning."

"Why, I don't see where he can be," said Miss Esther; "but he 'll probably be back in a few minutes. Chub said he went up the road —"

"Oh, *up* the road," said Jean.

Jean sat down by Chub. "I did want to play tennis this morning," she said. "I think somebody else might take Lieutenant Adams's place."

"If that very obscure hint is aimed at all in my direction," said Lincoln, "I refuse to act upon it. When I play tennis I must have a foeman worthy of my skill. Why don't you ask Chub to play with you?"

Chub, taking this as an invitation, rose and began a search for Putnam's racket. "I will play with Couthin Jean," she said, kindly, "becauthe bad old Uncle Putnam hath ranned away, and ith n't never coming back to play with you."

Although Miss Esther was used to Chub's romancing, this oracular utterance gave her

a sudden but unmistakable shock. "Don't mind what the baby says," she said.

"Couthin Jean doeth n't care if Couthin Putnam doeth n't never come back," insisted Chub.

"Oh, yes, she does, Chub," said Lincoln; "we all love Cousin Putnam."

"Yeth," said Chub, who always agreed with Lincoln; "we all love Couthin Putnam."

"Do you?" asked Miss Esther, looking pointedly at Jean.

"Yes, I love him a lot. I began worshiping at his shrine the very day he arrived. He seems to compel that sort of thing."

"He 's an all round good fellow," said Lincoln.

"He is, indeed," said Miss Esther, earnestly. "I don't know what I shall do without him. He says he can't stay more than a fortnight longer. I wonder where he is now? I thought he was over at your house."

"I know where he ith," said Chub, with the air of one who is possessed of a state secret.

"Where?"

"I don't think Uncle Putnam wanth me to tell."

"Well, don't tell if it's a secret," said Lincoln.

"It ith a thecret," said Chub, "and I won't tell, becauthe he don't want anybody to know he wath going to Farmington."

"What did he go to Farmington for?" asked Miss Esther.

"I don't know, but I gueth he wath going to thell wotheth."

"There ought to be a good market for roses in Farmington," said Lincoln, reflectively.

"Well," exclaimed Miss Esther; "if Putnam is carting roses over to Julia Fowler —"

"Oh, maybe she likes roses," remarked Jean, casually.

"Oh," said Miss Esther, softening a little; "if you say it's all right, I suppose it is."

"Of course it's all right," said Lincoln. "Whatever Putnam does is right."

"What an enviable reputation," said Helen, appearing suddenly in the doorway. "I wish people would say that whatever I did was always right."

"But, my dear girl," said Miss Esther, "you could n't expect to be looked up to as such a paragon of all the virtues as my cousin is. Of course, though, you 're always right — as far as you go."

"I 've gone pretty far this time," said Helen.

"I thought as much," said Jean. "When did it happen?"

"Last night — at the circus," replied Helen, serenely.

"Good for you!" said Lincoln.

"What did Couthin Helen do at the thircuth?" asked Chub, with interest.

"She went and engaged herself to Mr. Brewster," said Jean.

"What!" exclaimed Miss Esther. "Winthrop Brewster!"

"He 's the only Mr. Brewster I know," said Helen, apologetically.

"He 's all right," said Lincoln. "He 's

the best Brewster going. I think it 's great."

Jean said nothing, but flew at Helen and bestowed upon her a few dozen of that particular variety of kisses which are supposed to mean a congratulatory acknowledgment of tidings such as these, and taking possession of her, marched her down the steps and across the lawn.

"As President of the Matrimonial Bureau," said Lincoln, enthusiastically, "you are certainly making a screaming success of yourself."

"Yes," said Miss Esther, still looking a little bewildered, "but I am so surprised."

"Why, you planned it yourself."

"Yes, I know, but I thought my plans had all fallen through. Helen was so haughty and Mr. Brewster was so reserved. I was n't half so surprised when Lillian announced her engagement. I wish Helen would come back. I want to ask her more about it."

"Oh, she 's engaged all right — just as much as Lillian. Now that makes two, and you only have Jean left on your books."

"Yes," said Miss Esther, complacently. "And she 's all right, too, for I 'm just as sure Putnam means to marry her as if he had said so. Sometimes I think she 's engaged now."

"Perhaps she is," said Lincoln.

When Helen and Jean reached the gate they turned naturally in the direction of Lillian's house. They found her on the veranda, but when she saw the excited visitors she jumped to the conclusion that the exigencies of the occasion could only be met in the studio.

"Come on up," she cried; "what is the matter?"

"Ask Helen," said Jean.

"Well, you see," began Helen, "you said that Miss Esther said that she thought I ought to marry Mr. Brewster, and so —"

"And so she feels that she must," interrupted Jean.

"How perfectly lovely," cried Lillian; "I am so glad."

"On the principle that misery loves company?" suggested Jean.

"Yes — on that principle, of course; but I don't believe we call it misery, do we, Helen?"

"Not yet," said Helen.

"May I come in?" said a voice from the doorway; and without waiting for a reply Miss Esther walked in. "I could n't wait another minute," said she; "I just had to see Helen and hear more about this affair."

"Helen says it 's all your doing, anyway," said Lillian.

"Well, I did n't say exactly that," replied Helen.

"Well, what did you say, then?" demanded Lillian.

"Why, I don't know that I said anything."

"Then it 's time you began," said Jean; "and you 've got to tell us every single thing about it right straight away."

"It was just this way," said Helen; "Mr. Brewster said if I wanted to marry him I could, and I said I did, and that was all there was about it."

"What a kind man he is," remarked Lillian, reflectively.

"Did he tell you anything about his castle?" asked Jean.

"Yes, he described it at length. It has the most modern and approved automatic drawbridges and an electric moat —"

"Is that anything like an electric motor?" asked Jean.

"Same thing," replied Helen; "and it has a portcullis and scullions and castellated turrets and —"

"And a Prince?" said Lillian.

"Yes; a very beautiful Prince, too."

"Yes, Helen, he is," said Miss Esther, "and I am very much pleased. He seems to come pretty near realizing the ideals which you were discussing last spring."

"Yes," said Helen, disdainfully; "Winthrop goes far beyond any ideals I had then."

"Well," exclaimed Jean, "for a driveling idiot, give me a girl who has been engaged something less than twenty-four hours!"

"I think so, too," agreed Lillian; "I 've been engaged most a week, and I 'm as sensible as a judge."

"I wonder how I 'd act if I were engaged," said Jean, reflectively.

"Are n't you?" said Miss Esther.

"When I am," said Jean, "you shall be the first to know of it."

"Of course I shall," said Miss Esther; "I made Putnam promise that he 'd tell me the very first one."

"Well, you keep right on asking him every day," said Jean, "and perhaps you 'll find out."

"Just to think," said Miss Esther, "only last spring we were discussing the futures of you three girls, and now you are all practically settled. Helen has her ideal Prince, Lillian has her fairy godfather, and Jean —"

"Jean is n't engaged yet," said Lillian.

"When I see how it affects you two girls," said Jean, "I am not sure that I want to be."

"Sour grapes," said Helen.

"Nothing of the sort," said Miss Esther. "Jean can be engaged any minute she wants to."

"Well, I wish she'd hurry up, then," said Lillian. "It makes me embarrassed to have her left out."

"Could you give me till to-morrow?" asked Jean, meekly.

XXIV

I am in haste; go along with me: I'll tell you all. — *Merry Wives of Windsor*, v, 1.

Miss Esther was more than delighted when Putnam came to her in the library that evening and said that he had something to tell her.

"Perhaps I can guess what it is," she said.

"You 're pretty clever if you can," he replied, "for I did n't know it myself until to-day."

"No," said Miss Esther, smiling; "you did n't know it yourself until eleven o'clock this morning."

"No, I did n't," said Putnam, honestly. "In fact it came over me rather suddenly, and I thought you 'd like it if I told you first."

"Are you really engaged?" asked Miss Esther.

"Oh, no; I have n't spoken to her yet about anything like that."

"Well, why don't you?" said Miss Esther, with a slight show of impatience.

"I don't know how she 'd take it," said Putnam, with the first indication of diffidence that Miss Esther had ever seen in her cousin.

"There 's only one way to find out."

"Oh, of course, I shall ask her sometime, but not yet."

"Well, don't wait too long. I am very glad you have told me this. I think you and she were made for each other."

"So do I. I never before believed in love at first sight, but it certainly is what has happened to me. She is the most beautiful girl I ever saw."

"Perhaps not beautiful," said Miss Esther, "but she is certainly very pretty."

"More than pretty. I think she is a raving beauty."

"You 're probably prejudiced," said Miss Esther, comprehendingly, "but I 'm glad you do admire her so much. She is a good-hearted little thing with all her whimsical temper; but I feared you might think her perhaps too countrified and unsophisticated."

"Well!" exclaimed Putnam, "I never should call Julia Fowler unsophisticated. To my mind she stands for everything that represents the best and highest type of a cultured woman of the world. That kind of a woman, Cousin Esther, is the kind that appeals most strongly to me. It is the type I like best and Miss Fowler is the perfection of that type, just as little Jean Richards is the perfection of the peach-blossom type, or Chub is the perfection of winsome babyhood, and it's a great thing to meet at last the highest possible expression of the type one most desires. I have a great deal of the Adams clannishness in me, and I am glad you so thoroughly approve my choice."

"Putnam," said Miss Esther, looking at her cousin desperately, "go to bed!"

Left to herself, Miss Esther faced the situation. Her worst fears were verified. The invasion of Julia had proved as disastrous as she had anticipated. Not only were her own plans defeated, but she realized the appalling wrong she had done to Jean by assisting to bring about a state of affairs that now

she knew must inevitably break the child's heart.

"It seems," she thought, "that this glorious summer of mine is like to be turned into a winter of discontent. Not that I care so much for myself: the Matrimonial Bureau is not yet at the end of its rope. I could, of course, find another Prince for Jean, but the trouble is, I 'm sure she has set her heart on Putnam, notwithstanding her apparent antagonism, and after what she said this morning I feel sure I am right. I think she expected him to tell her so to-night, and now — well, I will do what I can. Patience, and shuffle the cards — perhaps there 'll be a way out of it yet. But I can't see a ray of hope for my poor little Jean."

But if Miss Esther had seen her poor little Jean at that moment she would have been obliged to confess that at least one ray of hope was illuminating her darksome horizon.

As a matter of fact she was spinning along with Lincoln Dodd in his automobile, quite

as contented as though there were no Putnam Adams in existence.

"You see," Dodd was saying, "I would have gone, but I had reasons for not wanting to go."

"I don't see," insisted Jean, "what reasons you could possibly have for not wanting to go on a lovely yachting trip like that — way up the coast to Labrador — to be gone for weeks, and with such a lovely party — they are lovely, are n't they?"

"Yes; the people are nice enough," said Lincoln.

"And a crew all in white duck, with beautiful gilt buttons — are n't they?"

"Yes; the crew is good enough."

"And beautiful ladies, in gorgeous clothes, sitting around in wicker arm-chairs on the deck! Are n't they?"

"Oh, yes; the women's gowns are good enough."

"And then, whenever they stop anywhere, there would be gala nights, with flowers and music, and dances on deck and Japanese lanterns and flags flying and banners waving!

Oh, I think it would be heavenly! I wish I could go!"

"Come on, and go — with me!"

"Oh," cried Jean, "I wish I could! But I'm not invited."

"My wife is invited wherever I am."

"I did n't know you had a wife," said Jean, with an air of polite interest.

"I have n't," said Dodd, "but I will have in about twenty minutes."

Lincoln turned the wheel and the huge machine swung around with reckless speed.

"Where are you going to get her?" asked Jean.

"Now, listen," said Lincoln, as they flew along the road, "and think fast. If we go on this yachting party, — you and I, — we 've got to catch that twelve forty-five train from Utica."

"What!" gasped Jean.

"It will take us about twenty minutes to get to Dr. Bushnell's; about twenty more to get married. That leaves us two hours to get over to the Utica station, and I guess this old machine will do it."

"You 're talking nonsense," said Jean.

"Yes, I know," said Lincoln, cheerfully; "but never mind that now. I told you you had to think fast. Now you 've got all the way from here to Dr. Bushnell's parsonage to make up your mind, and if you don't want to go on, say the word and I 'll turn around."

As they stopped at Dr. Bushnell's gate, Jean said, "I think we 'd better turn around."

"Too late now," said Lincoln, lifting her out.

"I thought it would be," said Jean, softly.

In response to Lincoln's imperative ring at the door-bell, Dr. Bushnell appeared and looked with surprise at his two late visitors.

"Come in," he said, blandly; "come in."

"Thank you, we will," said Lincoln.

Mrs. Bushnell rose to greet the pair as they entered the pastor's study. She was Jean's aunt, and as Jean's mother had been dead for many years, Mrs. Bushnell had always exercised more or less authority over her willful, high-spirited niece. Mr. Richards,

Jean's father, was away in a distant Western city on a business trip, and so Mrs. Bushnell considered Jean her special property for the time being.

"You must excuse us if we seem rather hurried," said Lincoln, with a more businesslike air than he often showed. "We are sailing to-morrow morning, and we must catch the twelve forty-five train out of Utica. We want you to marry us, and you've got just twenty minutes to do it in."

"Is that time enough?" asked Jean, anxiously.

"My dear young friends," began Dr. Bushnell, "you must realize the grave importance of the step you propose to take. The responsibilities of —"

"What are you two children talking about?" broke in Mrs. Bushnell.

"Never mind what we are talking about," said Lincoln, hurriedly. "We'll tell you some other time — we'll write to you — but now we want you to marry us —"

"But," said Mrs. Bushnell, "have you thought this thing all over?"

"Indeed I have," said Jean; "I had twenty minutes, and I thought fast. You see, it's this way, Aunt Serena; I'm going to marry Lincoln, anyway, and if I marry him to-night and catch that twelve forty-five train, we can go on the most beautiful yachting trip you ever heard of. Way up to Labrador, and the ladies have the most beautiful clothes, and Japanese lanterns and flowers — and everything."

"But, Jean — " began her aunt.

"Yes, I know, Aunt Serena, but we've only got twenty minutes, you know — and, Auntie, the yacht is the loveliest thing — it's all white and brass and shining — "

"Ah, yes," said Dr. Bushnell, "as the poet so effectively puts it, 'A painted ship — a painted ship' — "

"Now hold on, Dr. Bushnell," said Lincoln; "as I told you, we've only got twenty minutes — five are gone already. As Jean says, she's going to marry me, anyway; so you may as well let us go on that yachting trip and send us off with your blessing."

"You're the only one that can do it, Uncle

Isaiah," said Jean; "and please do, 'cause I would love that trip!"

"But, Jean," said Mrs. Bushnell, "does Miss Esther know about this?"

"No, and that makes me downright sorry; but I can't help it, Aunt Serena. You tell her to-morrow, won't you? and I 'll write to her. But we must catch that twelve forty-five train."

"So you must," said Dr. Bushnell, rising to the occasion, "so you must. Serena, my dear, if you will call the parlor maid — her name has for the moment escaped me, but you will doubtless remember it — if you will call her for a second witness we will proceed with the ceremony."

"Her name is Martha," said Mrs. Bushnell, still hesitating.

"Call Martha," said Lincoln, decisively.

"Are you sure," began Mrs. Bushnell, "that —"

"Call Martha," said Jean.

XXV

Those men are happy; and so are all are near her. — *Henry* VIII, iv, 1.

AFTER she had dismissed Putnam, Miss Esther sat disconsolately in her library, worrying over the imminent breaking of Jean's heart. She was fully convinced that Jean's interest in Putnam was very real, and she feared the effect on her emotional nature when she should discover Putnam's attitude toward Julia Fowler.

Possibly Miss Esther had taken too much for granted. Neither Jean herself nor Putnam had told her definitely of any intention that either had in relation to the future happiness or unhappiness of the other. But still, Miss Esther had observed the drifting of the straws, and being used to the drawing of conclusions from seemingly unimportant premises, she had decided in her own mind at least, that there was only one conclusion

to be drawn. This was one which pleased her very much.

On the whole, Miss Esther, up to this time, had thought that the plans which had been so whimsically made in the beginning had been brought to a conclusion that was not only quite to her liking, but which was entirely fitting from every point of view.

And now, just as she had dreamed that beside being the architect of the fortunes of her beloved girls, she had helped, too, in the detailed drawings of the plans for Putnam's future, he had come in with the startling announcement that the design was not at all satisfactory, and that he had decided upon using some home-made affair that she knew was not drawn to a proper scale.

Somehow, though, even in spite of the fact that one of her pet plans had apparently failed, Miss Esther believed that she should win. Nor was it in a sense of winning that she thought of it. Rather, she believed that now that two of her protégées had found what she chose to call their Fates, the other one of the three should, sometime, come to

a place where there should be the proverbial happy ending of the chapter. How it was all to come about she did not know. Her faith was secure in the fact that she knew what she knew. She had said long ago that the Adams pluck would ultimately win, and while the mere planning of the summer had been begun in the same spirit of romantic whimsicality which made her as a child play with the people of her dreams — on the stairs, on the lawns, and through the severe old halls of the Adams house — and which later had made her make these same heroes and heroines of her dreams her playmates through a life that would have been otherwise very lonely — "Ah," she said, "some dreams come true; and after all, the jesting word is not so often false but that it may be true."

Perhaps Miss Esther did not realize that the whole summer had been a living of the dream which, though built of the flimsiest of fabrics in the beginning, had proved, at the last, to be constructed of very solid materials.

Begun, as it was, it seemed that the summer, after all, had shaped itself with a sort of seriousness of which Miss Esther had not dreamed. She cared too much for the girls to play with them — and particularly she would not have played a game that would bring to them anything but the most perfect happiness. In planning it all, she had believed that it was rather a bit of a game — such as she played with her characters in the plays in the old volumes in her library — hers and her father's — and before that the father's father's — and even his father before him — they had all lived and dreamed among the books which had been to Esther Adams an inspiration and a delight which had lasted through the years of her life.

That these dreams, in some subtle fashion, had really carried out the mental suggestion of a mere advertisement in a Sunday newspaper, brought to her notice in a way that was little short of providential — all this entered not at all into the calculations of the woman who now faced a condition which was far from being merely theoretical.

So far as two of her girls were concerned, she was satisfied. Not that she — in thinking it all over — would admit to herself that she had deliberately brought Helen and Brewster together, or that she had thrown Lillian in the face of George Washington Dodd — far from it. That she was satisfied, there could be no doubt. But, as she put it to herself, "It was fortunate that Mr. Brewster came to visit Dr. Bushnell, and it was fortunate that Mr. Dodd came to visit his son."

Still — and this is the perversity of reasoning — she felt that Putnam's failure to carry out a cherished plan of her own was something for which she was directly responsible — not alone because of the fact that she felt that he would fail to do as she wished — and she disliked antagonism, like all the Adamses — but she felt, too, that somehow she was responsible to Jean in having brought her to the place where she might by any chance fall in love with a man who was fickle enough to be drawn away by the first pretty face that rose above the horizon.

There was in it all something which was altogether too like the suggestion of failure to appeal to Miss Esther. A battle fairly fought — won or lost — it did n't matter, so long as it was in the open: this was her delight. But to make an attempt, under cover, with however good intentions, and then fail — that was a sting, and one which made her feel that it would have been better never to have tried. Logic entered into the discussion not at all. She would not admit that she had tried to accomplish anything. And yet, behind it all, there was the haunting shadow of a failure.

She was as much annoyed as surprised when at that late hour Dr. Bushnell called upon her.

"How do you do," she said, with a perfunctory politeness. "What is the charity this time?"

"Ah, Miss Esther, you will have your little joke," said her visitor, blandly, "but it is not a charity this time. I come upon a far different errand. I bring news that will surprise you — ay, that will surprise you greatly.

I come as winged messenger — as winged messenger — the quotation has escaped me."

"But what is your important news?"

"It is indeed important news. Mr. Dodd — Mr. Lincoln Dodd —"

"Has anything happened to Lincoln?" broke in Miss Esther.

"I do not know that 'happened' is the term which I should use, but certainly something has occurred. Something has occurred to Mr. Lincoln Dodd. But a half hour since, I married Mr. Lincoln Dodd to my niece, Miss Jean Richards."

"What!" exclaimed Miss Esther, excitedly. "What! Jean married!"

"Yes," continued Dr. Bushnell, calmly, "they are married. My wife and I were very much surprised, as you are; but Jean is impulsive, you know, and Mr. Dodd said that it was absolutely necessary for them to catch the twelve forty-five train from Utica —"

"From Utica," gasped Miss Esther; "have they gone?"

"Yes, they have gone, and Mr. Dodd begged me to offer you his deepest apologies for seeming to leave you thus suddenly. But he said he would write."

"Write!" exclaimed Miss Esther; "I should think he'd better! I never heard of such a performance. Jean! Lincoln!"

Whistling blithely, George Washington Dodd came through the hall.

"*Will* you come in here!" called out Miss Esther. "What *do* you think!"

"What has happened," inquired Mr. Dodd, as he came smilingly into the library.

"Tell him, Dr. Bushnell," said Miss Esther.

"Prepare yourself, my dear sir," began Dr. Bushnell, "for a great surprise. As I was seated in my study this evening—"

"Lincoln took Jean over there and married her," broke in Miss Esther.

"Exactly so," agreed Dr. Bushnell; "exactly so."

"Lincoln!" said Mr. Dodd, bewilderedly, "and Jean! Are you sure you mean Lincoln?"

"Yes," said Dr. Bushnell; "he came in his automobile. I am sure it was Mr. Lincoln Dodd."

"Yes," said Mr. Dodd, reflectively; "it must have been he. On the whole, I am rather pleased than otherwise."

"Pleased!" cried Miss Esther, "pleased! It's glorious. It's perfectly magnificent."

"I am glad you feel that way, Miss Esther," said Dr. Bushnell, cheerfully. "As Shakespeare — as Shakespeare says —"

"As Shakespeare says," said Miss Esther, interrupting him, "'O, rejoice beyond a common joy! and set it down with gold on lasting pillars.'"

Lincoln's promised letter came. Miss Esther read it in the library. A part of it ran thus:

"Although my most abject apologies are due for running away as I did, with apparent ingratitude for your hospitality, I maintain that the exigencies of the plans of the Matrimonial Bureau demanded quick action. As Chairman of the Executive Committee and

President of the Advisory Board, I felt the responsibilities of my position, and I trust you will approve and ratify my action in the matter.

"Your orders, when I enlisted in your service, I have carried out in spirit if not in letter. You may remember that the first duty you required of me was to marry one of your clients. This I have done, and being thus disqualified for further assistance in your noble work, I am forced regretfully to offer you my resignation.

"If I may be pardoned for referring to one small favor I was happily enabled to grant, I will say, in connection with the fact of my bringing my father to Whitfield, that my great regret is that I have only one father to lay at the feet of the Matrimonial Bureau."

"One was enough," said Miss Esther, placidly. "I think I may congratulate myself on the unqualified success of my plans. Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered, and though I steered some myself, Fortune played into my hands."

"What are you doing, Couthin Ethter?"

cried Chub, dancing into the room with her arms full of flowers.

"I 'm winding up the affairs of the Matrimonial Bureau," replied Miss Esther, taking the baby up in her lap.

"Whath that mean?" demanded Chub.

"It was an effort to make some people happy, which succeeded beyond anything I ever dreamed of."

"Thath nithe," said Chub, contentedly. "Did it make *you* happy?"

"Very happy," said Miss Esther.

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